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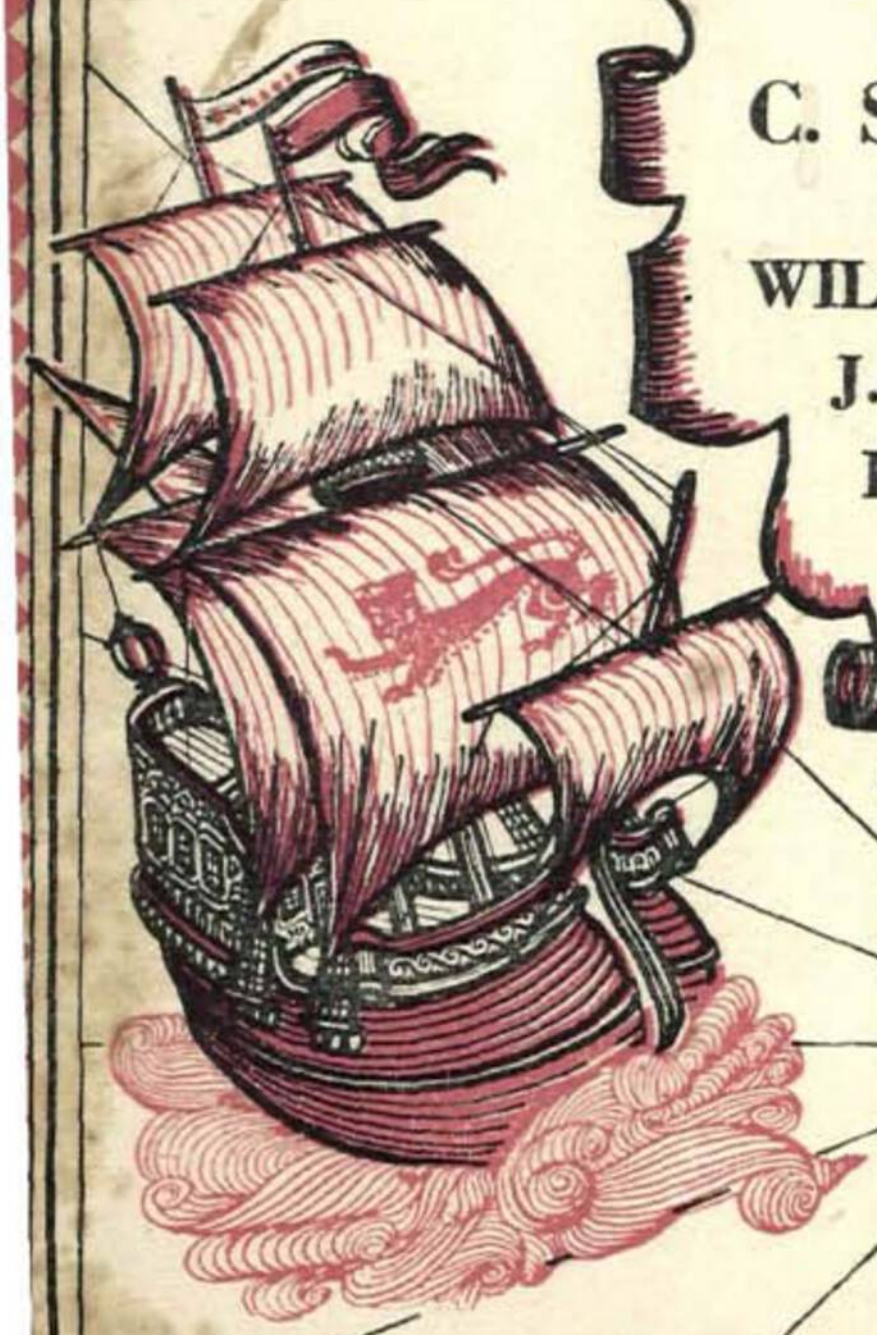
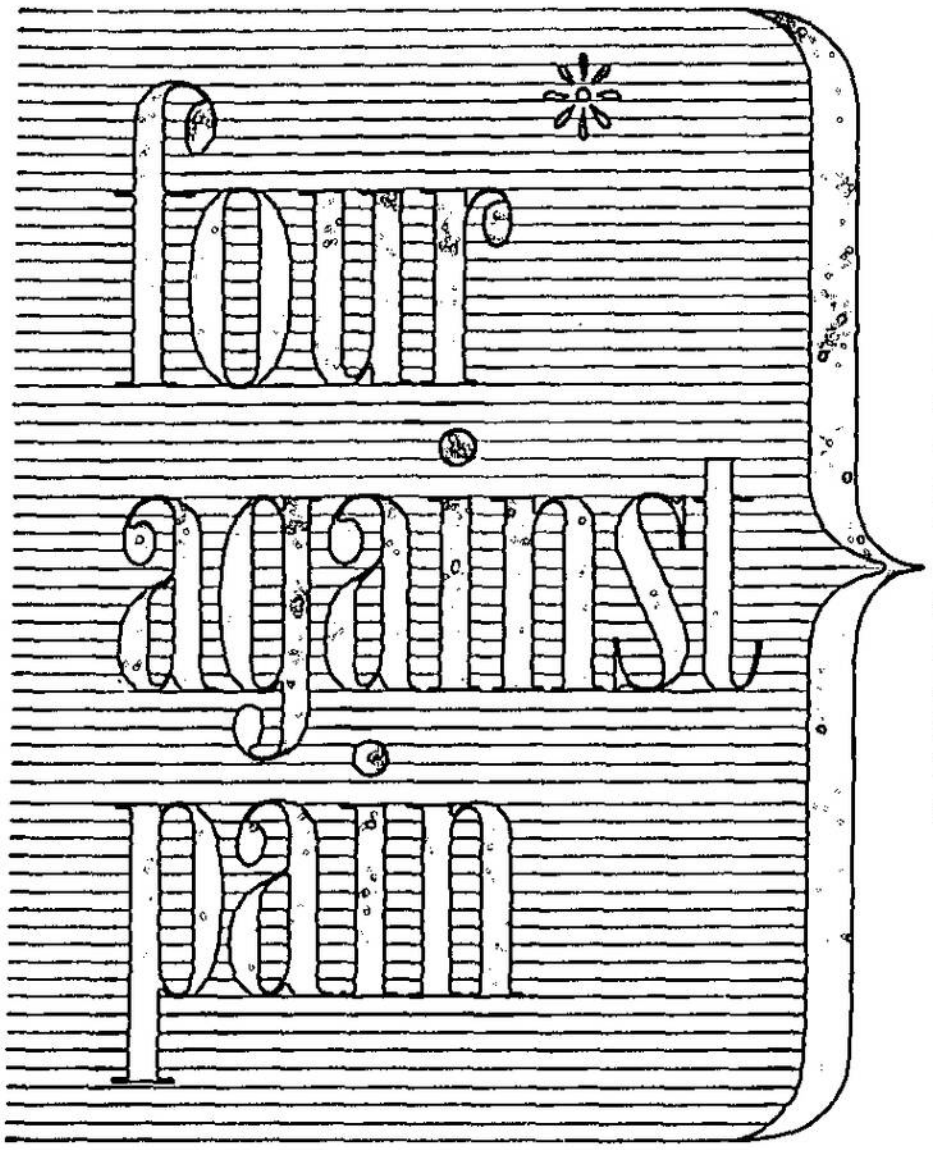
ARGOSY

A NEW
HORNBLOWER
STORY
by
C. S. FORESTER

• • •

WILLIAM SAROYAN
J. B. MORTON
H. E. BATES
AND OTHERS





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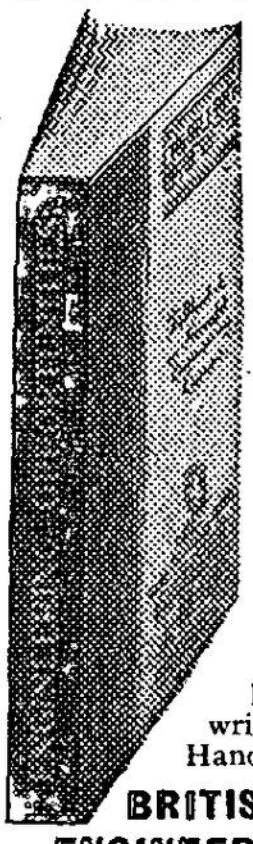

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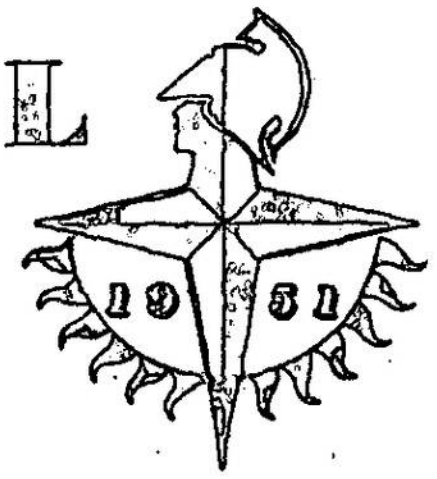

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ARGOSY

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April Day

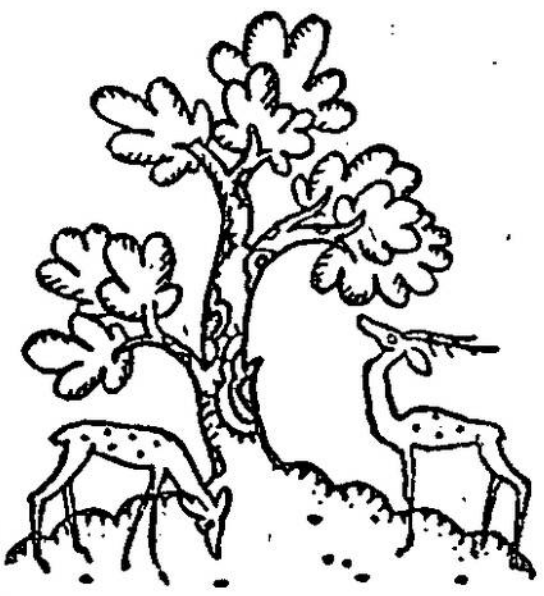
NOW we enjoy the rain,
When at each neighbour's door we hear
"How big primroses are this year"—
Tale we may live to hear again—

And dandelions flood
The orchards as though apple trees
Dropped in the grass ripe oranges,
Boughs still in pink impatient bud,

When too we cannot choose,
But one foot and the other set
In celandine and violet,
Walking in gold and purple shoes,

Rain that through winter weeks
Splashed on our face and window pane,
And rising in these flowers again
Brightens their eyes and fats their cheeks.

ANDREW YOUNG



THE GENTLE READER

A coincidence, you might say, at the very least!

by RALPH ARNOLD

AT intervals, all the afternoon, I had found myself thinking about Charles Otterden, Tommy Black and Sinclair Bruce. The reason why these three old friends had been uppermost in my mind was understandable, for the last time I had driven through Normandy—twenty years ago—had been in their company. And I had just finished reading Charles' latest book, *Maid of All Work*, an entertainingly erudite study of Queen Elizabeth.

Driving a fast car along those empty, ribbon-like French roads with their wide verges dotted with apple trees, their crazy, insubstantial telegraph poles and their occasional faded advertisements: *Dubonnet, Vin Tonique; Cointreau, la Marque Mondiale; Suze, Apéritif au Gentian*, encouraged a train of thought that embraced the past and the future but very seldom the present. I was slipping along like oiled silk through a countryside of little fields enclosed by hedge topped banks, of wide horizons with line after line of tall tufted trees, of narrow valleys with trout streams running through their rushy emerald green grass, of shabby avenues running back to curved roofed, blind-looking châteaux, and of village streets of flat faced plastered houses with tall shuttered windows.

Peaceful—it was the most peaceful thing I had done for years; and, save for an occasional lorry and a few crazy old touring cars, I shared the excellent highways with nothing more formidable than cape hooded gigs carrying farmers and their wives to the nearest market.

I noticed her at once, as soon as I had left my bag in the bedroom of the *hôtellerie* and had gone out to explore the garden. In a little arbour covered with a tangle of clematis, she was sitting reading on a white painted bench with her elbows planted firmly on an iron topped table piled with books. She looked up as I passed and then looked down again; and I christened her there and then *The Gentle Reader*. She looked gentle; gentle and small and enchantingly pretty, and totally unlike the scholar whom those piled up

tomes on the table might have suggested. Enchanting, that was the word for her; but then everything at *Le Relais Fleuri* at Hébé seemed to be enchanted.

I had come upon the place partly by chance and partly through the good offices of the invaluable *Guide Michelin*, which had marked it with the rare distinction of two stars for outstanding culinary excellence. I had played with the idea of stopping for dinner before going on to seek a night's lodging in the next town; but when I had passed a sign proudly proclaiming: *HEBE—SON CHATEAU, SON LAC, SA CUISINE;* when I had glimpsed the little town straggling up a hill absurdly crowned by a ruined tower; and when I had seen the long, low, two storied building of *Le Relais Fleuri* planted down beside the road, with its gravelled terrace planted with acacias, its garden with neat green lawns and tidy rose bushes and its clear, swift-running stream, I knew that I would spend the evening there. And lo and behold they had a delightful welcome for me, a bedroom, and the most tantalizing suggestions as to what I should eat and drink at dinner.

What I had not reckoned on was the company of *The Gentle Reader* and of Tommy Black and Sinclair Bruce. The two men strolled in after a day's fishing while I was drinking an *apéritif* at one of the little tables on the terrace.

Of course we said how small the world was; and, of course, they explained that they had discovered Hébé and its trout stream the year before, and had despatched their wives to the South while they spent a week in this little paradise; and, of course, when they had bathed and changed we had more drinks together and discussed the merits of the various *specialités de la maison.*

And all the time *The Gentle Reader* sat in her arbour reading . . . reading, her little head with its pale apricot curls bent low over the formidable book.

"I know," Sinclair Bruce said, "oh yes, indeed we both know. She arrived yesterday. But who is she? She reads all the time. She has the table next to ours in the dining room, and she reads right through her meals. Wait and you'll see."

It was after we had finished a superb *pâté* and a *caneton pressé* fit for the gods and after *Monsieur le Patron*, who was also the chef, had brought in a *bombe glacée*, that we stopped talking about food and ourselves and began on Charles Otterden.

"Poor old Charles," Tommy Black observed.

"Why poor old Charles?" Sinclair expostulated. "I shouldn't at all mind being Lord Otterden of Charter, one of the most distinguished writers of the day, with a lovely place in the Lowlands and enough money to keep it up."

At the next table, I noticed, *The Gentle Reader* raised her eyes, just for a moment from the pages of her book.

" Not to mention four wives in twenty years," I remarked.

" Three appalling tragedies," Tommy reminded us. " Aren't you forgetting that ? "

" Do you remember Guinivere ? " I asked. " Do you remember how lovely she looked at her wedding ? "

" Poor Guinivere," Tommy said. " Drowned in the lake at Charter. A bathing accident."

" I know," I said. " Yvonne came next, didn't she ? How attractive she was, with those enormous dark eyes."

" Drowned, too," Tommy put in lugubriously. " In the lake again. Canoeing."

" I am quite certain," I said, " that if I had been in Charles' place I should have left Charter—or drained the lake."

" In fact he did neither," Tommy said. " Sadie, his third wife, was drowned, too. Fishing. Big, splendid, handsome Sadie ! But even that did not shake him. Brilliant chap as Charles is, I sometimes wonder whether he isn't just a little bit mad."

" I wish," Sinclair remarked, " that he would bite some of my other authors."

I had quite forgotten that Sinclair was his publisher.

" Then, of course, you must see him sometimes," I suggested. " Tell me, what is the present Lady Otterden like ? Is she as attractive as all her predecessors ? "

" I don't know," Sinclair admitted, " because I have never set eyes on her. And I hardly ever see Charles these days. He's a regular hermit. But I did run across him the other day in Oxford. He had come to consult Angela Cobham who wrote that book on Joan of Arc. I understand that The Maid is to be the subject of his next *magnum opus*."

" It's rather strange," I observed, " that each of Charles' first three wives was both outstandingly pretty *and* outstandingly clever. I wonder if that applies to the present one ? "

" I have no idea if she's pretty," Sinclair said, " but she's certainly clever. She was Winifred Bryant, who is supposed to know more about Tudor England than anyone else in the world."

The Gentle Reader at the next table turned over a page and stroked back an apricot curl which would insist on straying over her right eye.

Tommy looked lovingly at the glowing end of his cigar and fingered his brandy glass.

" I've always wondered," he began, " just how much Charles' wives have helped him with his books."

"A very great deal," Sinclair replied. "I doubt if he could have written *The Round Table* without drawing on Guinivere's extraordinary knowledge of the Arthurian Legend. Then Yvonne had made a remarkable study of the French Revolution, and a lot of that material went into *Tricorne*. And without Sadie's researches into the American Civil War, *Brothers* would not have been half the book it is. The dedication at the beginning of *Maid of All Work* makes it clear how much he owes to his present wife; and now I imagine he's proposing to pick Angela Cobham's brains in connection with his new book."

"What would happen if . . . ?"

I was just beginning to frame an idle question when a most disconcerting thought crossed my mind.

"Sinclair," I said, "am I not right in thinking that Charles married Guinivere in 1928, and that his first book came out in 1930?"

"Quite right. *The Round Table* was published in the spring of 1930."

"What does Charles usually do—rest for a while after he has finished a book?"

"No. As soon as one book is written he starts immediately on the next. I remember staying at Charter in August 1930 and Yvonne was there—Guinivere was still alive of course—and they were hard at work on the background of *Tricorne*."

"And Guinivere was drowned that autumn and he married Yvonne in the following spring. When was *Tricorne* published?"

"The autumn of '34."

"And he began work on the American Civil War book straight away?"

"Yes. He and Yvonne went to stay with Sadie in the States. All three of them came back to Charter in the spring."

"And Yvonne was drowned that summer and he married Sadie in the winter."

Tommy was staring at me in horror.

"Look here!" he expostulated; but I went doggedly on.

"When did the Sadie-Charles book appear?"

"*Brothers*," Sinclair said, "was published in the autumn of '39, a day or two after war was declared. Sadie was drowned soon afterwards; Charles married his present wife, and the writing of *Maid of All Work* took him from then until the beginning of this year. If the Joan of Arc book takes him as long . . ."

He broke off.

"I suppose that the Angela Cobham woman is up at Charter now," I said. "Well, the present Lady Otterden has certainly had a good long innings. I wonder whether she can swim?"

" My God," Tommy exclaimed, " you can't really mean . . . ? "

In his agitation he gulped down the last of his brandy.

" It looks as if you're right," Sinclair admitted. " It looks most horribly like it. As soon as he has sucked their brains they conveniently die, and there's a new candidate ready to step into their shoes."

" I wonder," I went on, " whether it may not go even deeper than that ? I wonder whether each wife, in turn, may not have written the books that Charles has passed off as his own ? "

The Gentle Reader closed her book, got up and, as she passed our table, paused.

" I could not help overhearing what you have been saying," she remarked. " I can assure you that I did not write a word of *Maid of All Work*—but of course I did help Charles a good deal with the preparatory work."

As I wanted to make an early start next morning, I came downstairs for my *petit déjeuner*; and great was my embarrassment when *The Gentle Reader* followed me into the dining room.

Summoning up my courage, I asked her to share my table.

" Lady Otterden," I stammered, " I can't tell you how terribly contrite all three of us feel. It was quite unpardonable. Charles is our very old and very dear friend, and this ridiculous notion of ours was obviously the merest moonshine."

" Oh, but it isn't moonshine at all," Lady Otterden said, placing an embroidery bag and a big blue book on the table. " I think it was very clever of you to have tumbled to what has been going on. No one else has. Charles has certainly drowned all his other wives in the lake at Charter, and unless I'm very careful he'll drown me too. That's why I came away."

" But good heavens," I exclaimed, " you mustn't dream of going back to him—ever. Quite obviously Charles is a dangerous lunatic."

" But I'm devoted to him," she protested. " He's only mad on this one particular subject ; and Angela Cobham isn't really at all sound on Joan of Arc, and, what is more, she's exceedingly plain. Charles has never cared about plain women. But all the same, I'm taking certain precautions."

She pushed the big blue book across the table.

It was Moncontour's *Jeanne d'Arc.*

" By the end of this month," she said, " I feel pretty confident that I'll be able to wipe the floor with Angela on her own subject."

" But the frightful risk . . . ? " I said.

The Gentle Reader laughed. Then she opened her embroidery bag and took out a bright blue bathing dress.

" Each morning," she announced, " I take a swimming lesson in

the lake at the foot of the hill. Such a pretty lake and such an excellent instructor. That was one of the reasons why I came to Hébé."

* * *

HOUSE TO LET!

But in fiction—not fact! Do you recognize them, and to whom they belonged? Count one point for naming the owner, one for the source and one for the author, making a total of twenty four points in all. The answers are on page 61.

1. *This young man came from a very good home and had many kind friends, "who gave him Tea, and Cakes and Jam, And slices of delicious Ham . . . And even took him to the Zoo!" But, alas, this proved inauspicious for he got himself eaten by a lion!*
2. *"She dwelt among the untrodden ways,*
   Beside the springs of Dove,
   A maid whom there were none to praise
   And very few to love—" except, it seems, the poet.
3. *They lived together on a lonely island, these three undersized little men. "Their house was small and sweet of the sea, And pale as the Malmsey wine; Their bowls were three, and their beds were three, And their nightcaps white were nine."*
4. *On the walls of this neglected little house hung baskets of ferns, alternating with plaster statues of Garibaldi, the infant Samuel and Queen Victoria, while down one side of the fore-court ran a skittle alley. There was a goldfish pond, too, but not a bite in the house except a tin of sardines, a sausage and some ship's biscuits!*
5. *It was no more than a raft with a rough wigwam built upon it, safe from the steamboat wash, and capable of supporting a fire. And, what with fish, and some foraging ashore—or on the river wrecks, where the Captains' cabins never failed to supply cigars—what more could a boy want anywhere along the Mississippi?*
6. *It had been one of the stately homes of England once, a fine old house, but it harboured a spectre with malignant intentions towards the master—and against the woman he had wished to marry.*
7. *An amateur plumber would hardly have been a natural choice for parlourmaid here—but the servant problem was a pressing one for her ladyship, though even she hadn't bargained with one so green eloping with the guest of honour.*
8. *This house seemed well equipped with cucumber frames, judging by the crashing of broken glass outside—but that was small comfort to the unhappy intruder trapped inside, never sure, from minute to minute, whether the building would become too large or too small.*

NOTHING TO DECLARE

But would anyone believe them!

by J. B. MORTON

THE little band of Basque smugglers had halted for the night on the Spanish side of the frontier. They were French Basques from the Labourd, thoroughly trained in all branches of the work, and were now returning to France with half a dozen fine Spanish mares which they hoped to sell in Hasparren. But between them and the reward of their enterprise lay the frontier. The *douaniers* knew, of course, that many of the villages of the Labourd had small teams of smugglers, and when, from time to time, an order came to show greater vigilance in suppressing this illicit traffic, the mountain paths were patrolled.

The leader of this little smuggling gang was Zurruga, a broad shouldered man of forty, with a bullet head and enormous hands. He now took counsel with his comrades. It was decided that when darkness fell the horses should be brought to a friendly farm which was almost on the frontier, while the sharpest witted and most agile of the younger men, Maitagaray, went off to explore the territory where there might be patrols, and to pick up what news he could.

It was a black night without moon or stars, and heavy rain was falling when Maitagaray set out. He met no patrol, and crossed the frontier and came down to Galantenia, a stone's throw from the *douane* post of Sare. The news he picked up in a house where his married sister lived was that there had been patrols out on the mountains for a whole week recently, and that it was unlikely that there would be any more activity for some while. There was one more piece of news. The Bishop of Bayonne, Oloron and Lescar was making a visit to Sare on the day after tomorrow.

Having eaten and drunk the young man took his way back to his companions. He found them asleep in a shed, and lay down among them just as the dawn was breaking.

As soon as they were all awake Zurruga questioned Maitagaray closely, and was soon convinced that unless the patrols were suddenly sent out again, it would be quite easy to get the horses through. But Maitagaray was not so sure.

"They have a good idea," he said, "of who is in our business and who isn't, and I could tell from my sister's manner that they are determined to catch some of us soon. It would be a fine thing for them, too, if they could catch us just when the Bishop is on the spot."

"What Bishop? What are you talking about now?" asked Zurruga.

"The Bishop of Bayonne is coming on a visit to Sare tomorrow."

"I don't suppose he bothers his head much with our trade," said Zurruga.

After a short silence he went on, with a gleam in his eyes: "Would it not be a pleasant surprise for this Bishop of ours if he found himself with an escort? A mounted escort?"

Maitagaray took the point at once. He laughed long and loudly.

"But how?" he asked.

"Tomorrow night," said Zurruga, "we will cross the mountain, going by the Black Path. We will there disperse to our homes, each taking a horse, and we'll put on our best clothes, as if for a Feast Day. Then we'll meet at the edge of the forest. Iparaguirre will go into Ustaritz to find out by which road the Bishop is approaching. We shall then await him, and offer him an escort of his loyal people as far as Sare. After that we can go about our business in peace and no one will worry us."

"It would be very amusing," said Arotcha, a tall, lean giant. "But I do not understand why, if we get the horses through safely tomorrow night, we cannot complete our business without wasting time. What need to put ourselves and our horses under the noses of the *douaniers* in Sare?"

"It is a way of getting credit with the Bishop, and with everybody else," replied Zurruga. "It is the last thing the police would expect us to do, if we had smuggled horses over the mountain. We will say we borrowed the finest horses in the Labourd, to honour our Bishop. If, as Maitagaray says, they are beginning to get excited about us, this will calm them down a bit."

"I like this plan," said Iparaguirre. "Everyone knows that it is the custom to borrow horses for an escort on such occasions as this."

So, after a short discussion, it was decided to carry out Zurruga's plan.

At nine o'clock the next morning the Bishop and his chaplain drove in a large carriage out of Bayonne by the Spanish Gate, and took the road along the left bank of the Nive.

The Bishop was in a good humour, and acknowledged with grace and youthful pleasure the salutations of the people who had

gathered in the villages to see him go by. He was a portly, red faced man of fifty five, and his wizened little chaplain seemed an older man, and more weighed down by cares and anxieties. Presently the carriage left the main road and the river, and took the bye-road that runs through the forest of St. Pée to St. Pée and Sare.

As they approached a cross roads the chaplain repeatedly bobbed his head in and out of the window, as though the group of horsemen he had seen were bandits waiting to hold up his lordship. The Bishop was at length persuaded to take a look. He did so.

" It is some deputation or other," he said.

As the carriage came up to the cross roads, it was evident that the leader of the deputation wished to speak to the Bishop. He had drawn up his fine white mare in the middle of the way, and had removed his beret. The Bishop ordered the carriage to stop, and the chaplain got out. He saw before him half a dozen men in clean white breeches and white coats, with scarlet sashes. Each man was mounted on a beautiful mare, and each had doffed his cap, the ceremonial red beret with the gold pompom.

The leader now dismounted, and trying to look humble, addressed the embarrassed chaplain thus :

" Pray, Father, have the goodness to say to his lordship the Bishop, that we, his humble flock, wish to welcome him to the Labourd. Further, we ask as a favour that we may be allowed to escort him to Sare, as we think it fitting that our Bishop should have an escort supplied by his loyal people."

On hearing these words the hard, drawn face of the little chaplain had slowly softened, and a difficult smile had spread over it, wrinkling the corners of his eyes, and giving his mouth the look of one who is tasting something bitter. He stepped back to the carriage, but the Bishop had heard the address of Zurruga, and leaning out, he waved his arm, and cried, " By all means ! I thank you. By all means, my son ! "

Zurruga jumped into the saddle, and gave an order. Two men fell in behind the carriage, two took station one on each side of it, and two went on ahead—Zurruga and Maitagaray. And as the cavalcade moved forward, the driver, who had been dozing, nearly jumped out of his seat when he heard a loud bugle note. Maitagaray, with the bugle to his lips, turned in his saddle, and waved the carriage on with the splendid gesture of a cavalry officer leading a charge.

Well contented, the Bishop leaned back, and the carriage jolted along towards Sare.

When they came to the last fork of the road they slowed down to

receive the greetings of the men and women and children who had come down from Galantenia, and of those who had come running from the fields and farms. The Bishop, leaning out of the window to give his blessing to the kneeling figures, noticed one laughing group, and smiled broadly to them. Even as they knelt they were laughing, and the Bishop said to the chaplain, " Never have I seen such merry people. It does one's heart good."

The merriest of all was a handsome, fair haired woman, the married sister of Maitagaray, who could appreciate a joke, and liked to share it with her neighbours. As he passed on, Maitagaray scowled at her, and growled, " Imbecile ! " Then to relieve his feelings, and to warn the people of Sare of the Bishop's approach, he raised his bugle, and blew an unmusical blast which made the chaplain, who was something of an organist, wince.

The Bishop caught his rueful look, and said with a wide smile :

" Let us say that his enthusiasm redeems his lack of musical skill. Or perhaps it does not ? Eh ? "

The chaplain shrugged his narrow shoulders. A second long blast, followed by a jumble of grace notes, made a reply unnecessary.

Arotcha, who was riding in the rear with Iparaguirre, said :

" I still think all this is foolish. Everybody knows by now what we are up to. That silly sister of Maitagaray, you may be sure, has given the game away. Fine fools we shall look in Sare."

" Trust Zurruga," was the reply. " He wouldn't have taken such a risk if he wasn't sure of himself. For myself, I am enjoying it all. It is the first time I have done a job of this sort."

Inside the carriage, the chaplain was saying, " These are very fine mares they are riding. I wonder where they got them ? "

" They borrow them," said the Bishop. " They go to a great deal of trouble on these occasions, in order to get the very best mounts available. I fancy these are Spanish mares."

The chaplain darted a quick look at the Bishop, expecting to meet an understanding twinkle in his eye. But the Bishop was looking straight in front of him, and did not appear to think there was anything more to say on the subject.

A twirl and a flourish on the bugle announced the entry into Sare. The street, on either side, was lined with people. The Mayor, *en grand tralala*, was stationed outside the Town Hall. The curé and attendant clergy waited in the porch of the Church of St. Martin. On every side there were exclamations of amazement at the sight of the six smugglers.

The carriage drew up outside the Town Hall, whose arcaded gallery was the pride of the place, and the Bishop was helped out by his chaplain.

When he had greeted the Mayor, he made a sign to Zurruga, thanked him for the honour of the escort, and signified that he would retain the men no longer.

" The steeds of the Labourd are justly famous," said the Bishop to the Mayor.

The Mayor agreed with a sickly grin. And Zurruga, who thought that he was being so clever, repeated to anyone within earshot, " We borrowed them, you know. They are not, of course, our own. Where would we get such fine mounts ? "

" Where, indeed ? " said the old postman, who had known something of these matters in his youth.

As Zurruga led his little band along the street, the *douaniers* crowded the entrance of their house to admire the sight.

" Nothing to declare ! " shouted Zurruga gaily.

The *douaniers* roared with laughter.

* * *

ONLY FAIR

Each year the oldest Cardinal visited Heaven to present to the Highest Authority a report on the progress made by the Church on earth. He travelled at first in a carriage drawn by magnificent horses, later in a superb Alfa-Romeo car, and finally in a most modern and swift aeroplane. He was admitted by St. Peter who, once the great man was inside the gate, slipped out to have a look at the aeroplane.

He was much impressed and asked the pilot if he would take him a short flight while His Eminence was " in conference." The pilot said that he dared not do such a thing.

" Does it cost a lot of money ? " the Saint asked.

" A very great deal."

" Perhaps His Eminence could pay," the Saint suggested.

" I can't possibly do that," declared the pilot.

The fine, robust Saint answered, " Nonsense ! For years they've had boxes in the churches marked 'St. Peter's pence '—I've never had anything out of them yet ! "

Told by NAOMI JACOB, *in* Me Looking Back

QUEER STREET

Ah! for that reckless fire men had
When it was witty to be mad

SIR EDMUND GOSSE, 1849–1928

And our Curate—we're proud of our Curate . . . They say he goes out in Winter at three o'clock in the morning, and stands up to his neck in a pond, to cool and overcome his appetites.

LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH, *More Trivia*

Sir George Produces An Egg

He had sent for me to see him one afternoon on an urgent matter. When I entered his room, he rose from his bed, in which he had been resting, locked the door so as to be sure we should not be interrupted, and then went back to bed again. In a low voice, he confided in me:

"You know, Osbert, I sometimes have an idea with money in it."

"Yes, Father."

"Well," he gave a long dry laugh like a cackle, "I've just produced an egg."

He waited a little to allow me to look astonished, which certainly I did—sufficiently, even, I think, to satisfy him.

Gratified, he continued, "It's a breakfast egg . . . The yolk will be made of smoked meat, the white of compressed rice, and the shell of synthetic lime—or a coating of lime. It will be delicious, will last for ever, and be ready at any time. It wouldn't matter where you might be, in the desert or on a polar expedition, all you'd have to do would be to boil it for two or three minutes, as you wished—and there would be your breakfast . . . It may make the whole difference to explorers!"

"What a good idea! You ought to patent it at once."

"As a matter of fact, that's why I want to consult you . . . how am I to place my egg on the market? . . . I thought, perhaps, I'd see *Selfridge's* about it—they seem very go-ahead. But whom shall I ask for, and how shall I announce the reason for my visit? I daren't trust my egg to anyone else—it might be stolen."

"I should ask for Mr. Gordon Selfridge himself . . . Just step

into Mr. Selfridge's sanctum, saying, 'I'm Sir George Sitwell, and I've brought my egg with me!'"

"Capital idea! That is what I will do. Thank you so much, dear boy. I knew you would help me!"

Accordingly, he set off for the Oxford Street shop the next morning at eleven: he was dressed in a silk hat and a frock-coat, an article of dress already, even then, nearly extinct, and carried a bundle of papers, with diagrams on them . . . He was very late for luncheon when he returned, and though his eye seemed to rest on me with a certain coldness, he never explained what had happened during the interview, if it took place.

OSBERT SITWELL, *Laughter in the Next Room*

Poor Warty Bliggens

i met a toad
the other day by the name
of warty bliggens
he was sitting under
a toadstool
feeling contented
he explained that when the cosmos
was created
that toadstool was especially
planned for his personal
shelter from sun and rain . . .
the sun to give him light
by day and the moon
and wheeling constellations
to make beautiful
the night for the sake of
warty bliggens . . .

if i were a
human being i would
not laugh
too complacently
at poor warty bliggens
for similar
absurdities
have only too often
lodged in the crinkles
of the human cerebrum

DON MARQUIS

Isadora Duncan Rides À La Brünhilde

At Villa Wahnfried I met some young officers who invited me to ride with them in the mornings. I mounted in my Greek tunic and sandals, bareheaded. With my curls flying in the wind, I resembled Brünhilde. As Phillip's Ruhe was some distance from the Festspiel Haus, I bought one of these horses from an officer, and I attended all the rehearsals *à la* Brünhilde. As he was an officer's horse, the animal was used to spurs and was very difficult to manage. When he found himself alone with me, he indulged in all sorts of caprices. Among others, he used to stop at every public house on the road, where the officers had been accustomed to drink, and, planting his four feet on the ground, refuse to move until some laughing comrades of his former owner would come out and escort me further on my way.

You can imagine the sensation my appearance created when I finally arrived before the entire audience assembled at the Festspiel Haus . . .

ISADORA DUNCAN, 1878-1927, *My Life*

Warm Welcome

Mrs. Gladstone, under an impulsive manner sometimes verging on eccentricity, hid the kindest and most generous of hearts . . .

She told a friend that, when Mr. Gladstone was late at the House, she kept some soup for him. " But how do you keep it hot ? " " Oh ! I take the tureen into bed with me ! "

SIR GEORGE LEVESON GOWER, *Mixed Grill*

Aunt Sarah Shoaf

Then there was Aunt Sarah Shoaf, who never went to bed at night without the fear that a burglar was going to get in and blow chloroform under her door through a tube. To avert this calamity—for she was in greater dread of anæsthetics than of losing her household goods—she always piled her money, silverware, and other valuables in a neat stack just outside her bedroom, with a note reading : " This is all I have. Please take it and do not use your chloroform, as this is all I have."

JAMES THURBER, *The Night the Bed Fell*

NO MORE THE NIGHTINGALES

"They're over," he said, "all finished and gone"

by H. E. BATES

WHEN she had finished her afternoon nap she stood by the open bedroom window, still in her cream yellow slip, looking over the harvest field. She could feel the heat rising in a great steamy breath across the plain and on the shimmering waves of it, across the half cleared field of wheat where every stalk of stubble seemed to quiver like a crest of water; the orange tractor appeared sometimes to bob up and down, rocking under the glare of sun.

She always felt relaxed and soft after sleep, her body lovably smooth and damp, the skin almost oily, like the skin of a sleepy pear put away and kept in a drawer too long. She was growing a little over-ripe and fleshy, and the straps of her yellow slip had made weals of bright pink where they had cut into her deep white shoulders while she slept. In London she sometimes did exercises for it before she went out at midday, but it was not much use and Andrew was always telling her she should work in the harvest field and do healthy things like throwing sheaves or shocks about, and was always teasing her because she did not know one from another. But the weather was too hot and her arms always skinned raw in the sun and her face and the deep plump front of her neck got an awful unhealthy appearance, like a heat rash, that powder could never quite conceal.

When the tractor and wagon came nearer to the house she could see Andrew quite clearly, bronze arms pinning his pitchfork into the top of the truck. He was growing tremendously thick and dark skinned and healthy, and already, she thought uneasily, he looked more than eighteen. It was surprising how, in their last terms at school, boys suddenly became men and before you realized it were completely detached and separate creatures.

She thought she saw him begin to lift his hand to her and she wanted to wave in reply but she knew if she did so that Bellamy, the man who camped in the caravan trailer down by the brook, would see it and think it was meant for him.

She had to avoid that sort of thing; she had to be careful with Bellamy. In other years there had never been anyone like Bellamy

on the farm. There had just been the country folk: farm hands, women who came in to help in the fields, Jess Martin and his wife and two boys, Wilf and Charlie: just the country folk. Nobody intruded. Only once, during the war, there had been an American Army lieutenant from Illinois who had come to help with the harvest and who had looked at her several times rather as Bellamy did: not so much with his eyes as in deep oblique pulses of feeling and a slow smile with his tongue wet and red as it pushed down over his fleshy underlip.

Bellamy, like the lieutenant, made her very uneasy. It was not simply that she felt he knew so much about her; that he might suddenly disclose something Andrew would hear. It went much deeper than that. In London, in other circumstances, in circumstances that were so different that she could never quite relate them to empty, corn fragrant August nights when nothing stirred about the farm except countless frittering poplar leaves above the pond, she would have picked out Bellamy in a million. She did not need to be very expert for that.

Standing by the window, still drowsy and dreamy with sleep, it came to her suddenly that the tractor had drawn in to the very edge of the field and that Bellamy, who was driving it, was sitting there staring up at her. The light of mid afternoon was so fierce that she saw a smear of new oil flame green on his near cheek, where he had freshly wiped his hand.

She went back into the bedroom and immediately began to dress. As she put on her clothes she felt the little room, close under the rafters, insufferably thick and stifling with sun. There was so little movement of air from the fields that she simply put her short sleeved white dress over her slip and combed her thick red brown hair and put on her flat heeled white shoes. It was too hot for stockings.

Later, when she went out with the can of tea and the cups in the basket that she always took to the men at half past three, the tractor had moved away on a half circuit of the nearly empty field. Once she was clear of the poplar trees shading the gate by the end of the farmyard there was no sound across the white stubble except the voice of a single yellow-hammer, almost bleating its song, in a still green patch of burnt hedgerow where the corn had caught fire three days before.

The four men, Andrew, Bellamy and the two Martin boys sat by shocks of corn in narrow shade cast by the wagon while she poured tea. Her skirt was rather short and she found it a little difficult to manipulate and sometimes as she struggled to her feet it slipped briefly up over her white plump knees, and she saw Bellamy looking

at her with drowsy mindless eyes.

" When are you coming down to look at the caravan ? " he asked.

" Oh ! It's so hot," she said.

" Always cool by the brook. Coolest place on the farm."

" Oh ! I don't know—anyone for more tea ? "

Both Martin boys said " Yuh, please," and tossed arcs of tea leaves across stubble before holding out their cups.

Andrew said, " I could drink for ever. I just wish I were a tea-urn and they made it inside me," and the high fluent public school voice, not strange to her except when she heard it with others, made her proud and glad with renewed confidence that, over the years, she had done so well for him.

" Come down tonight," Bellamy said. " Bring Andrew."

" We don't get supper before nine and then it's so late," she said.

" The boy wants to fish," he said. " I've been telling him I saw trout there. We could all fish."

" I'm not much good at that sort of thing," she said.

" I'd awfully like to have a smack at them, I really would," the boy said. " Mr. Bellamy has rods."

" It's always so late when you get finished and then somehow we sit talking and before you realize it—"

" We're on the last field," the boy said. " It's all we have to do."

" Well, you go," she said. She saw Bellamy looking at her with eyes on which the lids were lowered like heat sapped petals : sleepy but challenging, and immediately she felt confused and uneasy again and blurted out :

" You go by all means. I'd rather stay up in the garden and listen to the nightingales."

The Martin boys roared with such gusty cracked laughter that she hardly heard what Andrew said and could not look at Bellamy sprawling back against wheat sheaves with legs and arms splayed, his brown naked chest heaving with laughter under his white open-necked shirt.

" Mother, you're the limit," the boy said.

" Now what have I said ? "

" There aren't any nightingales. They're finished. It's past the season. They've gone."

" Then what is it I hear at night ? It's birds of some sort—what are they ? "

" Heaven only knows," he said. "But they're not nightingales."

" Oh, all right—" she smiled, indulgent, unoffended but still uneasy—" I just don't know about these things."

" You can't know about everything," Bellamy said, " can you ? "

He was looking at her closely, directly. She tried not to look back and was glad when one of the Martin boys said, " Load up, chaps.

Sooner we load, sooner we git done," and swished away his tea dregs in a black sparkling arc against the wagon of wheat sheaves.

She began to pack up the other cups but Bellamy said :

" Here, what about me ? I only had one cup."

" Well, if you just lie there helpless," she said, " expecting to be waited on hand and foot."

" I can come and get what I want," he said.

As he heaved himself upright and came over to her with his empty cup one of the Martin boys shouted, " I'll drive ! " and a second or two later the tractor moved past her like a lump of solidified oily heat, leaving her with a curious sense of being unsheltered in the middle of the completely shadeless field under the naked sun.

Bellamy lolled on one elbow and held out his cup. She filled it steadily while he looked beyond it at her dress drawing itself tightly across plump knees and then smoothly, under the strain of her arms, across her breasts.

" Sorry I laughed about the nightingales," he said. " But it's just about two months late—even for the Berkeley Square kind."

" There's no need to apologize."

" Ever hear them in Berkeley Square ? " He drank tea, looking up at her over the tilted cup ; but she did not answer. " It used to be a nice square. But now it's gone over a bit. Gone down."

When she did not answer again he looked straight at the shadow between her legs where the white skirt pulled stiffly across the heavy flesh and said :

" Come down tonight. The boy really wants to come."

" He's perfectly capable of coming by himself without me."

" Well, I know that."

" If you know it, why keep asking me ? "

He smiled, running his tongue across his lower lip, slowly, infectiously, so that she felt herself stir warmly and uneasily again. Sun hit the nape of her neck with blunt pain and she felt the world of the empty harvest field, with the tractor so far away now that it was simply like a thumping pulse in the heat, rock and tremble momentarily about her.

" I really must go," she said. " The heat's something awful. If I sit in it too long it makes me sick."

Unconcerned, as if he had really not heard what she said, he asked :

" Going back to business now the harvest is finishing ? "

" I'm independent." She spoke coldly, trying to repress her uneasiness, and she felt her voice intensely trite and unreal. " I've got no business."

" Very lucky," he said.

He drank the rest of his tea in a single swift movement that became, in the swivel of his head, a rapid glance down the field to see where the tractor was. It glowed under distant grey smoky poplars like a ball of fire. In another second he had let the cup roll out of his hand across the stubble and was leaning and pressing across her body, kissing her.

It came to her so naturally that she felt her arms widen responsively and her mouth open moistly before she realized that she did not want it to happen at all : that she wanted it to happen less than anything in the world. She struggled against sensations that were hypnotic and repellent and it was only when she felt the sharp barbs of stubble pressing like needles into her back that she cried out a little and he let her free.

" Now perhaps you're satisfied," she said. She sat up and combed her fingers madly through her straw laced hair and then stood up, smoothing down her dress.

" You're good," he said. " I knew you would be."

He stood up, too.

" Why all the fuss about it ? " he asked.

" You can bring the cups," she said. She strode off, face away from the sun, her neck bluntly pained by the naked heat of it again.

" He's got to find out some day," he said. " After all."

She felt her entire body, in a single sickening drain of strength, go weakly cold, as if nothing were left to clothe the pared and frigid bone. When her blood came back it was with a corresponding stupefying thickness, so that as she turned to him she could hardly see.

" Please," she said.

His brown and white figure seemed to quiver and temporarily explode into fragments against the sun. When they solidified again he was holding her. She was glad of it and did not protest and he said :

" You can trust me. It's all right."

She did not answer.

" Come down after supper. Will you ? It would be nice. We could talk—"

" All right, if I can go now."

" Go," he said. Quite gaily he let his arms open in a mocking sort of way as if she were a tame hen that he knew could not possibly fly.

And later, lying on the bed again in the stifling little bedroom, she felt rather like that herself : a tame crumpled helpless hen, too stupid to know which way to run.

When she got up at last her face, too, was ruffled and hen-like, her cheeks greyish with sweat-caked powder, like gills, her hair moistly matted, like a tattered comb. She felt awful as she stared at herself in the glass ; she had never looked so ghastly. The evening air was full of what now seemed the intensely annoying sound of perpetually turning poplar leaves. Swallows were flying high over the empty wheatfield and she noticed them simply because they recalled her foolish and amusing remark about the nightingales. They might have been nightingales, too, she thought, for all she knew.

She dressed slowly and went down to supper. All through the meal, early tonight because it was Saturday and the last field was cleared, she could hear the perpetual fretting and frittering of poplar leaves. It seemed as if millions of them were falling in the wind ; it created for her the strange feeling that the long warm summer was breaking.

" I'm not coming fishing," Andrew said. " I'm going into town with Wilf and Charlie."

" You promised Mr. Bellamy to come down to the caravan," she said.

" You go."

" I'm not the slightest bit interested in fishing," she said.

" Well, listen to the nightingales," he said.

Again, from Martin and his wife as well as from the three boys, there was much laughter. She smiled and tried to take it well.

The trouble is I'm too easy going, she thought.

As she walked away from the house, in the still hot evening ripely heavy with the strawy sweetness of corn, she felt her nerves recovering and smoothing out ; she felt less and less like a frowsy crumpled hen. It was only when she was two fields away from the house, in sight of Bellamy's caravan and the brook, that she realized she had left the poplars and their irritation of leaves behind.

I'm too easy going, that's it, she thought. I always was. She felt herself, in the cooler air about the brook, relaxing. Odd how she always felt more human at night, a fraction more indulgent and tender ; curious that night never brought its good resolutions. It was only during the daytime that she gnawed at herself, telling herself to end this and that, to pull herself together.

Bellamy came out from the caravan and across the meadow, to meet her. " Where's Andrew ? " he said. He had changed his working shirt for a blue one. Three fishing rods were standing ready, with pale sky blue casts, by the van.

" I came down to tell you he went into town," she said. " I didn't want you to wait or anything."

" Oh ! it's nothing," he said. " Come in."

" I mustn't stay."

" There's nothing to prevent your coming in to have a drink, is there ? "

" I suppose not."

" I should suppose not at all," he said.

It occurred to her suddenly, as she went into the bright chromium and plastic caravan that her coming had nothing to do with indulgence, with being easy going ; she had come because she was frightened of what Bellamy would say.

" How do you like your gin ? " he said. " With water or pink ? Sit down."

" Pink." She sat on the bed.

" What shall I say ? " he said, holding up the glass so that one blue eye seemed to flower with cold globular irony about the brim. " Here's to the next time ? Or what ? "

" Just what," she said.

He smiled and drank and said, " When do you leave ? "

" Day after tomorrow."

He twisted his mouth and seemed about to make some fresh remark of crisper and obliquer irony, but nothing came of it and suddenly he drew her down on the bed. She did not protest. Her body melted into incredibly swift fusion with his, her blood beating up into her throat and ears. " You're good," he said. " I knew you were good the first time I saw you," and she felt anger and heat rise up in her in a ravenously sweet impulse to bite the words from his mouth.

Some time later, when darkness and a slight late summer breath of coolness had crept up from the brook, she heard him say, " I ought to light the lamp," but she felt once again like a hen, clipped and frowsy and scraggy and old, all passion gone out of her.

She said : " For pity's sake don't. I can dress in the dark."

He lay still in the darkness while she was dressing.

" Will the boy come fishing tomorrow ? "

" You must ask him."

" You brought him up well. You made a lot of sacrifices . . . It must have cost something."

She did not answer ; she felt there was nothing to answer ; and he stirred on the bed.

" I'll walk across the fields with you," he said.

" No," she said. " I can go alone. I'd rather."

As she walked across the fields, up the rising slope of grass towards the cleared stubbles of corn, the light in the farmhouse and the renewed trembling sibilant sound of poplar leaves, she kept

telling herself that she was too easy going, that she ought to give it up, that she had to pull herself together and be firm with herself now, once and for all.

I shall really have to do something, she thought.

Two days later, when the taxi drove into the stack yard, between gold-white houses of corn, to drive the boy and herself to the station, the whole family, with Bellamy, stood by the gate to say goodbye.

"See you next year!" they said. "Come earlier next time. Get here for the nightingales." Everyone was laughing. Under their teasing she felt once again like a foolish, frustrated and haggard hen. "Make up your mind earlier! Come for the hay!"

"My love to Berkeley Square," called Bellamy.

Across the empty fields, cleared of harvest, swallows were flying very low under thin grey cloud and in the cooler air she felt there was a break, at last, in the long summer.

She rapped angrily on the glass to the taxi-driver, dawdling between cloudy empty fields.

"Get a move on!" she said. "For Heaven's sake. We shall be late for the train."

* * *

CURTAIN UP

The couple had arrived at the theatre through a downpour of rain, and when they took their seats it was not surprising that the girl left her escort and slipped out of her seat in the Circle to tidy her make-up and disarranged hair.

It was an old fashioned theatre with winding corridors, and she had difficulty in finding the ladies' rest room. However, she eventually entered a large room, furnished in a heavy Victorian style. There was nobody about except a maid busily dusting a chair.

Carefully she adjusted the seams of her stockings, her hair, and when she saw her make-up in the mirror she exclaimed aloud in tones that startled the maid: "What a horrible mess! I look a fright!"

The make-up restored, she made her way back as best she could through the maze of passages and sat down beside her escort. The play had started.

"What's the plot so far?" she whispered anxiously. "Have I missed anything?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" was the unexpected response. "You should know. You were in it!"

Coronet

THE PLOT

How could anything go wrong with such a carefully laid scheme?

by WILLIAM SAROYAN

THE plot was as follows: The L Street Boys would dig the three feet deep, six feet long, three feet wide hole in the middle of the short-cut across Kazakian's empty lot that ran from M Street to the alley between L and M. They would dig the hole at midnight, after everybody in the neighbourhood had gone to bed, so that Apkar Popcorn, as he was called, who was the first to use the path in the morning, would not suspect anything. They would cover the hole with plaster-laths, newspaper and dirt.

At half past five in the morning they would hide behind Kazakian's house and watch Apkar Popcorn fall into the hole.

The L Street Boys were the Shimshamian brothers, Husik and Jaziyire, called Fussy and Jazz; the Melkonian brothers, Arsen and Ardash; Fat Kishmish; Shag Barekomian; Haig or Ike Ardzrooni; and George Vrej. But it was Fussy and Jazz Shimshamian who were the creators of the plot. The backyard of their house on L Street faced the backyard of Apkar Popcorn's house on M Street. Two of their chickens had wandered across the alley into Apkar Popcorn's garden and Apkar Popcorn had captured them, but he had denied it, and now the boys wanted to get even.

The other L Street Boys didn't know about the chickens; they just liked the idea of making a hole for Apkar Popcorn to fall into, so they dug the hole and covered it precisely as planned, and at half past five in the morning they gathered together behind Kazakian's house. Apkar Popcorn left his house on M Street every morning at exactly a quarter to six, and he always used Kazakian's short-cut on his way to town, so the boys knew they would see something unusual in a few minutes.

At twenty minutes to six a tiny woman entered the short-cut on M Street and began to move upon the hidden hole. This was not what the L Street Boys had had in mind, but the woman had appeared so suddenly and was moving with such speed upon the trap that everyone became speechless.

At last Fat Kishmish said to Fussy Shimshamian, " That looks like your mother, Fussy."

" No," Fussy said, " my mother's at home baking bread."

" Isn't that your mother, Jazz ? " Fat Kishmish asked.

" Yes, it is," Jazz Shimshamian said. " What's she doing on M Street ? "

" That's Jazz and Fussy's mother," the L Street Boys said.

" Well, aren't you going to stop her ? " Ike Ardzrooni asked.

" How can I stop her ? " Fussy said. " She'd kill me."

" You've *got* to stop her," George Vrej said. " One of you has got to stop her. You just can't let your mother fall into our hole. We dug that hole for Apkar Popcorn, not for your mother."

" Jazz," Shag Barekomian said, " you've got to stop your mother from falling into the hole."

" It's too late now," Fussy Shimshamian said.

The L Street Boys stopped breathing to watch Mrs. Shockey Shimshamian fall into the hole they had dug for Apkar Popcorn. The woman had only two or three more steps to take. They saw her left foot go through the false surface, and then every bit of her plunged forward on to the surface, and then into the hole. They heard a scream.

The trap had been perfectly set and concealed, and it had worked perfectly.

After the woman had disappeared into it, the L Street Boys turned and ran. They ran straight down San Benito Avenue across the Southern Pacific tracks to the outskirts of China Town, and there, outside Chong Jan's wholesale Produce House, they stopped to think and talk things over.

It was agreed that no member of the organization would confess knowing anything about how the hole had come into being, and there the matter ended.

Mrs. Shimshamian was not seriously injured, but she did go to bed for a week.

The open hole remained in Kazakian's empty lot for several years and was finally filled with rubbish from Mr. Kazakian's home.

Every morning at a quarter to six, on his way to town, Apkar Popcorn glanced at the hole. It broke up the monotony of his walk very nicely.

* * *

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER . . .

Abraham Lincoln disliked listening to complacent cut-and-dried sermons. " When I hear a man preach," the President once explained, " I like to see him act as if he were fighting bees."

SNOW LADY

Silence was the secret of her being, and no syllable must be uttered before her

by FRANK STUART

THE yellow girl, kneeling antlike amidst the Chinese mountains, felt her heart wither with fear, but she lifted her shoulders and stared unflinchingly upwards at the strange goddess far above her.

" Because of your purity, *Snow Lady*, keep me safe from Yi Wan and give me to my lover, Kim Ho."

In this place where no one must speak above a whisper, the first pale light of dawn, creeping between two peaks, was just touching the *Praying Place*, as tradition said it should. Enormous gaps still filled with night surrounded that bare rock platform. A mountain river gobbled in the dark below. The rocks gave out the live smell of dawn.

Choe, on hands and knees, pressed her burning forehead to the polished trail once more, but the *Snow Lady*, incarnate in her white awesomeness, remained remote.

She towered, an immense accumulation of snow, ice, soil and boulders, leaning out over the trail like a woman's head and torso. A vast helm of snow was on her brow, and vague hands covered her breasts. For centuries, lovers had prostrated themselves and writhed and prayed where Choe crouched. So long as legend went back, no one had ever spoken aloud in this place.

Choe straightened herself again. Her strained yellow face watched once more for the sign. Her mouth trembled. Then she caught her breath. Perhaps some eddy of the dawn wind fluffed the snow, but Choe saw the *Snow Lady's* hands faintly move. Trembling the girl's taut body collapsed, and scalding tears welled in her eyes.

Still muttering thanks, she rose at last and raced, nimble as a deer, down the *Rock Path*, familiarly fearless of the vertical rock wall on one side and the thousand foot drop on the other. The trail narrowed suddenly and became a broken track. It was fifteen minutes before she saw ahead, on a broad hill shelf, the rabble of mud huts under whose grass thatched roofs mingled all the dearness and perplexity of home. With pride, she slipped into the biggest hut, the headman's house.

" Where have you been, daughter ? " her mother asked sharply,

her hands deep in the savoury rice she was mixing for breakfast. Choe drew back a step. Her mother's smooth, round face was stern, and, even worse, her eyes held pity.

" I've not been to see Kim Ho, if that's what you mean ! " Her own words shocked Choe, for in China it is a deep sin to be irreverent to a parent, but she could not help it.

" Get the bowls ! " her mother commanded, making no comment. That frightened Choe more than any reproof, and she trembled as she turned to obey.

At breakfast, sitting on the floor round the low table, the family, which usually chattered all the time, today ate in silence. Only Yi Wan, the guest, talked. His thick and oily old voice seemed to fondle Choe from head to foot.

" You honour me too greatly by allowing your daughter to leave this exquisite palace for my poor, tiled roofed hovel in the city ! " he mumbled, his mouth crammed with rice. " It has only fifteen miserable rooms with heated stone floors, and my twenty one paralytic servants can never cook such heavenly food as this—er, is it rice ? " He wrinkled his flat old nose sneeringly at his bowl. " You will permit this poor mendicant to make you into a lady, child ? "

Choe could not swallow the rice in her throat, for she felt herself in imagination stifling in a city she had never seen, her body aching for barefoot mountain paths, and with this dribbling old man with grey hair sprouting from his ears " making her into a lady."

" The *Snow Lady* grows angry if we leave her ! " She repeated the old village saying in a low, despairing voice.

Yi Wan's belly quaked with laughter on his knees. " *I* left her fifty years ago. I owned nothing then, not even a cook pot. Now I have a great factory for weaving soldiers' uniforms. Hundreds of girls work for me. The prettiest virgin in China is to be my wife. Undistinguished and despicable as I am, yet I am not afraid of a heap of ice and dirt ! "

In the awed silence following that blasphemy, Choe saw a vision of the *Snow Lady*, divinely calm, faintly moving her white hands in a gesture of comfort.

As if conjured up by the goddess' gesture, a young man burst into the hut. Choe's bowl clattered as she set it down, and she looked up into the eyes of her lover, Kim Ho.

" How dare you make this intrusion ! " The headman was on his feet, his face as hard as the granite of the hills.

" What is this I hear about Choe ? "

The young man was different from other Chinese. He was slimmer, straighter, his face dreamy and sensitive, his hands elegant with nervous strength.

Yi Wan, heaving himself up surprisingly quickly for such an old

and heavy man, padded across the room towards the intruder, his grey ear tufts bristling like the back of a fighting dog.

"My daughter is betrothed to this rich and noble person!" the headman said, his eyes veiled.

"But . . . you know we have loved each other since we played with the flowers as children. Every day, I have read her my poems. You and her mother have smiled on me. Besides—this fellow is bad. You know it—we all know it!"

Choe saw the strange shadow cross her father's face again—it had haunted his looks since Yi Wan rode into the village three days ago. In all her seventeen years, she had never known her father afraid of any man. Yet he was afraid now.

"It is not for you to question what I decide for my child!" he said sternly to Kim Ho. "You are disturbing my noble guest. You must go at once."

The boy turned about like an animal in a trap. Yi Wan, sneering beside him, had one hand deep in his robe, and that hand held a half drawn knife. Choe, breathless, watched Kim Ho. He stood tense as the string of a harp. His eyes flamed, yet when he spoke, his voice was still courteous and beautiful.

"I own my house. I have a cow and a pig and fowls of my own. I grow enough corn for a wife as well as myself. With me, your daughter will be as happy as a wild bird. This fellow may be rich, but you know he is bad. He will break her wings . . . Besides, he is a merchant—and *I* am a poet!"

There was silence in the hut, and Choe's heart swelled with wild pride. In China, a poet is respected as highly as a Royal Prince. Some of Kim Ho's poems had already attained most distinguished notice, and famous men's flowery compliments upon them were jealously treasured and known by heart to every villager. The night before, when the amazing news of Choe's sudden betrothal to the stranger, Yi Wan, had been heard abroad, every man's head wagged at his neighbour's ear. Only the poet, in his hut a little apart from the rest, just as he himself was always a little apart, had not been told.

Yi Wan began to laugh.

Choe's father's face darkened with a strange expression. "It is not because you are poorer than this rich and noble person," he said gravely. "There are things poets do not understand. I am thinking of our village."

"Of the village? Why?" The boy's noble head went up sharply. "Can you mean . . . your daughter is a bribe to this son of a pig? What can he do to *us*? We drove him out once. We can do it again!"

Yi Wan withdrew his hand from his knife and folded it over the other in his sleeve. He laughed on and on till the sound became a loud indecency. Kim Ho's hands suddenly opened, and Choe's mother, watching them, thrust her sturdy figure between the boy and his tormentor. The headman urgently clapped his hands, and two servants glided from behind a screen and stood on each side of Kim Ho.

"Go!"

Instead, the poet leaped with such tigerish swiftness that, though they caught him, his weight sent Yi Wan spinning against the wall.

"Imprison him!" the headman ordered harshly. Somehow the servants got Kim Ho out of the room.

"I pray your noble forgiveness for this coarse and unseemly disturbance in my pitiful hovel," he muttered, avoiding Yi Wan's furious pig eyes. "I am desolated that this common person should have touched you with his offensive body . . . Please honour me by séating yourself. I have some unworthy fruit you may care to laugh at."

"The sweetest fruit is that which is most difficult to pluck!" Yi Wan lowered his paunch on to his thighs again, and ogled Choe till her blood drummed with rage and she waited for her father to have this indecent person put outside. But the headman and his wife looked stonily in front of them.

After the meal was done, and flowery farewells had been said, Yi Wan rode his flea-bitten pony away up the *Rock Path*, the village's only thread of communication with the outer world. He carried a rifle in his hands, and was hung with daggers and revolvers. Though a man of over sixty, he rode like a centaur.

Praying frantically that a rock would drop and crush him, Choe fled through the house to find her father.

"Oh!" she gasped, shaking with anger and terror. "You have avoided me ever since you announced my betrothal last night. Oh—how could you do it to me? Always, always, you know I have loved Kim Ho. Out of deference to you, since we were young, he waited for a sign of your approval, but . . ."

"Stop, child!" Her father raised an authoritative hand. "Obedience is the chief ornament of daughters!" he quoted. "Beauty grows only with humility."

Choe's nails drove deep into her palms. "But you let me think I should marry Kim Ho. For years, I have been thinking of the day when I will go to his hut. Over there, I would put our wooden and straw shoes. Here are the pot and kettle in which I am to cook him savoury dishes such as his heart loves. There stands my winnowing basket. Here we will stand the embroidered screen his mother

worked. There the straw strainer. He himself sits at the lovely cabinet of polished wood with pearl inlays that he made on which to write his poems. By the window I will place that bowl of celadon—that beautiful bowl he has, like a poem. See—already, he is carving wood for a cradle ; a man like he will make such a cradle that his baby will sing before it can talk ! "

Her father set strong hands on her shoulders, and she realized that she was facing him and not in Kim Ho's hut. " Child ! " he said in a hurt voice. " I see I must tell you something I have not even told your mother. We will never speak of it again."

The old man paused, his benign eyes heavy with sorrow. The hands that had comforted her shoulders now seemed to cling to them for support. " That man, Yi Wan, came here to threaten our village. It is the soldiers—the bandits to whom he sells uniforms from his factory. Soldiers have not come here since before you were born. You have heard the tales. When they come, there is suffering, shame, death and hate. I remember villages being burnt when soldiers came ; more came to save us from the first, and then more to save us from those . . . Yi Wan threatened to bring the soldiers down on us again."

Choe's eyes felt as if they would never shut again. She licked and licked at her dry mouth before she could gasp : " Why ? "

She had indeed heard tales. All China knew what a visit from " the soldiers " meant to a village—fire blazing through the grass roofed huts, wantonly burned crops, stolen cattle, impaled babies and old people, the choked screams of the raped and the dry gasps of the dying, while for those who were left there was terror, homelessness, starvation—and then liberating soldiers !

" My daughter, Yi Wan is a child of this village," her father's tired voice went on. " Fifty years ago, as a youth of fifteen, he did an unnameable thing. Older men who were there have told me how the whole community scourged him along the *Rock Path*, and how he spat at them and swore to return for his revenge . . . Three days ago, he came back to tell me he had arranged to bring soldiers here."

" Why didn't you kill him ? " she panted.

" Then what would have happened to my village when the soldiers came ? They would have killed every man, woman and child . . . I would give my life to save the village. But it was you he wanted."

Choe licked her lips again feverishly. How could the *Snow Lady* help her now ?

" He came here, child, to watch us suffer for three days in the knowledge of what was coming. He had arranged to meet the soldiers this morning at the far end of the *Rock Path*. He knew we

dared not kill him, and at first he promised to mitigate their treatment of us if we raised a great ransom and gave all our young men to them for the wars . . . Then he saw you. He said if I would betroth you to him at once, he would send the soldiers away without coming here . . . He is a Confucian, and he swore to me by the names of his ancestors and by the Golden Rule itself . . . I had to save our village. There are two hundred here. You are only one."

Choe twisted violently out of his hands. "Then he will come back alone, and we *will* kill him," she hissed. "If there is no one else, *I* will kill him!"

"He has my promise, daughter—if he saves my village, you will go to him humbly. Destiny cannot be turned aside, Choe—it is to be endured with patience and dignity. I had to save my people."

"What will you do with Kim Ho?" she muttered. The anger was draining out of her, leaving her empty and trembling.

"He will be released in an hour. Alone, there is nothing he can do."

An hour later, Kim Ho was let free. The young poet ran to his hut, hung a long hunting knife at his belt, and set off at a swinging mountaineer's trot up the *Rock Path* after Yi Wan. Going on springs almost as a tiger goes, he steadily breasted the narrow ascent. Up and up he went, till he reached the broader trail where, far above, the *Snow Lady* sat in her majestic white calm. He had written many poems to the *Snow Lady*, and now he murmured some lines from one that brought tears to his eyes because they were so beautiful. But his steady run never slackened. The trail, alternately narrowing and widening, dropped away ahead towards the distant valley.

It was early afternoon when he trotted round the last corner of the *Rock Path*—into the arms of a sentry. The man's rifle clattered down as he gripped Kim Ho. Muscles hardened by years of fighting and looting met the steely springed muscles of the natural hunter. Startled, the soldier let out one yell for help before Kim Ho reached his throat. As he dropped, half a dozen others in the same mud coloured uniform jumped into the fray, and a rifle butt crashed on the boy's head.

He regained consciousness, tied hands to feet, doubled up beside a campfire. Soldiers squatted round, stolidly eating. Beside him, a bullet headed officer with a brutal face was talking to somebody. Twisting, Kim Ho saw it was the merchant, Yi Wan.

Yi Wan heaved to his feet and his boot crashed against the poet's wounded head so that agony pierced it like a sword. "My snarling puppy has run after my heels, eh?" He administered a kick in the ribs by way of a change. "I did not want you here, but now you

have come, I will be kind to you." A third kick crashed home. "It will please me to tell you my miserable plans for your great and noble city. They will amuse you; it will delight me to give you some humble amusement."

Kim Ho strained silently at his thongs. If he could burst or slip them, he might somehow escape ahead and warn the village, for the very air about Yi Wan reeked of treachery. Perhaps they could get the people away into the hills. He thought of Choe, and his shoulders swelled as he pressed his wrists against the knifelike thongs.

"I'm taking these honourable and distinguished men to your village," Yi Wan chuckled. "I'm afraid I made your famous and noble headman believe that I would use my pitiful influence to turn the soldiers aside. Do you know why I told him that? Listen to me, there!" He savagely kicked Kim Ho's head again to attract his closer attention. "As a poet, you will, I know, appreciate my poor subtlety. I wanted to make him hope and then be disappointed!"

His laughter oozed round his great, heaving stomach; the little eyes disappeared in rolls of merry fat.

"It was so that I might openly insult and degrade that princely headman of yours, and make him suffer insolences to save his hovels . . . and then return and burn them round his ears after all! It was to make him offer me of his own accord that exquisite porcelain piece, his daughter—and then go back and take her in front of the low soldiers who serve my famous and gallant friends here!" He nodded, wheezing away tears of laughter, at the group of laughing officers. "And when we are tired of her, master poet, these gutter scourings of common soldiers can have her, and you shall write a poem about it; yes, I think we can make you do that!"

Kim Ho made no answer. The old merchant wiped the water from his eyes and scratched one of the grey tufted ears.

Ten minutes later, a bugle rang out, and the mob of soldiers formed into a straggling column. They wore dun uniforms, good boots and straw hats. Their faces were inexpressibly brutal and empty and degraded. They stank. Many were heavily diseased. But they were well armed and seasoned in everlasting fighting.

Kim Ho was unbound, and the lashing refitted only round his wrists. He was savagely prodded into movement, and a soldier walked on each side. The whole column began to move up the *Rock Path*. In front went sharpshooters ready for an ambush. Then came the bullet headed officer on a grey pony, accompanied by Yi Wan on his villainous little horse. Kim Ho and his escort followed. Finally, in a tight straggle, were perhaps three hundred heavily armed troops, many with machine gun parts strapped on their backs.

"I've been charged on these rock shelves before," the officer

growled, when Yi Wan laughed at their warlike order. " A few mad peasants on horseback can sweep a loosely ranked column down a precipice before you can unsling a gun. I'm keeping my men tight together."

" You don't call them soldiers, do you ? " Kim Ho sneered loudly. In his mind, the first edges of a madman's plan were beginning to form. " They scramble along like sheep or ducks. If I could join you, I would show you how to make them keep step ! "

Yi Wan raised his rifle to strike the poet with the iron barrel, but the officer, who did not like civilians anyway, struck it aside. " Let the boy alone ! " he snapped. " I might take him as a recruit."

" That you will not ! " Yi Wan growled savagely. " *I* have other plans for him. Very different plans ! "

The officer grabbed Yi Wan's bridle and jerked both horses to a halt so suddenly that Kim Ho almost went over the precipice edge. " In the cities, you may be somebody, with your swindling boots and rotten clothes made of grass," the officer said loudly. " Here, if I raise my hand, my men will fling you down there ! " And he spat rudely down the abyss at their side.

He turned to Kim Ho, and gave the bridles a shake to set the horses going. " You shall see them march in step, bumpkin, if you want to. My men *can* march, believe me. They have marched half over China, some of them. *In step there !* " he roared.

Like magic the straggle became orderly. The column stiffened into ranks. *Tramp*—tramp—*tramp*—tramp . . .

The noise of the stamping, booted feet came back like thunder from the rocky mountain walls and canyons.

" But—now they are magnificent ! " Kim Ho cried out in simulated wonder. " Not a man at fault. They march like an animal with six hundred legs."

The officer was pleased.

" I will compose a poem about this," Kim Ho cried. " That is, if I have your honourable permission ? It might make the way to our poor village seem less tiring for Your Eminence."

" As you like," the officer said curiously. " Are you a poet, then ? If I had known that, this man should not have kicked you. You must die, I think—now you've killed one of my men, the rest would never let you live. A pity ; I would have liked a poet to amuse me and write about my battles and the men I kill."

Kim Ho began to improvise a poem. As the column tramped deeper into the mountain pass along the *Rock Path*, the men had to fall into fours sometimes, but towards the top, where the *Snow Lady* was, the trail broadened enough for them to reform as a solid column. Kim Ho raised his voice louder and louder above the

tramping feet. He was shouting his brave lines now, but nobody paid any attention, and even the officer seemed to have forgotten him.

Kim Ho's face was running with sweat, though the journey, even with bound hands, was nothing to his mountain muscles. But now was the time to put his plan into effect. Now, indeed, was the time to die. He knew that as far as memory went back, nobody had ever spoken aloud in the presence of the *Snow Lady*. Legend said that once the *Snow Lady* had had a sister who brooded gigantic over what had then been a second exit from the village, on beyond the rock shelf. One day some drunken young men had shouted an impertinence at the great snow figure—and it had crashed down on them and blocked for ever that outlet from the village, sealing it with hundreds of tons of earth, ice and stones. What had been done once might—perhaps—be done again.

"Soldiers—let us sing!" he yelled, in a voice that echoed fantastically back—SING . . . *sing* . . . sing . . .

He began one of those traditional songs known for thousands of miles, perhaps all over China, those songs to which soldiers have marched for a century in that unhappy land. First one or two, then all the troops, picked up the refrain and sent it bellowing up to the holy silence where the *Snow Lady* bent far outwards over their heads. *Tramp—tramp—tramp* went their feet, and their voices thundered in time with the sound, led by Kim Ho's, soaring triumphant over all.

Swift as a beetle, the poet raced sideways, flinging himself tight against the rock wall beneath the overhanging cliff.

As the echoes of the holy place awoke, it seemed to Kim Ho that vast winged shapes began hurtling silently above his head. In all the army's din, the ear of the poet detected a new sound. A murmur. A whisper like a god's voice calm and far away, then gathering, growing nearer, swelling in volume till it silenced this puny human blasphemy and poured in the delicate ear whorls like the bursting of a waterflood. A roar more awful than mountain thunder; an anger colder and darker and more deathly than anything human could be.

Like toys flung about, the little soldiers burst from their ranks and began to flee this way and that. Some fell over the precipice and went whirling and sadly crying down the abyss. Others sat down, their legs failing them with fear. All this before anything came to hurt them except that noise that was the doomful voice of angered mountain gods.

Then, at the booming vibration of those feet and voices, the *Snow Lady* broke up. She leaned far out over their heads, paused, and in a mystic veiling of snow smoke, seemed to Kim Ho to glide into the skies. A vast boulder hit the trail's edge, cracked away

twenty yards of it with several soldiers on it like ants, and majestically tossed it down the thousand foot precipice. Dust, pebbles, rocks, pouring snow, jagged fields of ice, more snow and more cascaded down. There was a roaring and a sighing gigantic beyond thought. A wind produced by the avalanche soughed and screamed down the gorge, uprooting trees on each side of the gliding snowfield. Then the whole trail was covered and buried and broken away and flung bellowing down to create a second avalanche after the first . . .

Kim Ho awoke suddenly from unconsciousness to find himself imprisoned beneath snow, aching all over, his torn clothes dripping water and blood. In a panic, he began to scrabble with his bound hands and his legs. At once, his hands burst through the snow, and he got his head out into the calm evening sunshine.

He stopped as if turned to ice, too. It seemed that his heart stopped beating. For the trail was completely gone. He hung between sky and infinite abyss on a jagged tooth of rock beneath the overhang of cliff that had saved him. It was covered with a wild slide of broken snow and earth—but it stretched close to the cliff face round towards the village, out of sight. On the other side, that side which had provided the village's only outlet to the world, the trail was shaved off clean. There was vertical black rock there. Nothing more.

Kim Ho, sweat breaking cold at every pore, began to work the thong at his wrists up and down against the rock's knifelike edge. He seemed to go on for hours. Then the leather frayed and snapped so suddenly that he almost overbalanced, and went dizzy at the thought. His swollen wrists and hands trembled and ached. Presently, with incredible slowness, feeling every step and handhold, he began to scrape himself like a fly along the cliff face towards the village.

A huge shoot of snow and rubble went roaring away into the valley as he put a hand on it, and he hung panting and sobbing. He moved on, a yard, two yards.

Suddenly, the rock crumbled under his reaching foot, he tried agonizedly to regain his balance, went slowly too far over . . . and shot down the cliff face. Something struck his back cruelly so that his very fingertips numbed, but it held him—a jagged stump of a tree the avalanche had snapped off. He hung there unmoving, it seemed for a lifetime, fearing to start another cascade of stones. Then, like a snail, he climbed away.

When, at last, he was on firm ground where the *Rock Trail* had been snapped off short, he tried to straighten himself and at first could not. Bloody, in rags, but without a bone broken, he looked back the way he had come, and shut his eyes in horror.

The *Snow Lady* had vanished as her sister had vanished. The village lay below him on its rock shelf, but it was isolated now and for ever.

Tears pricked the poet's eyes as he thought of the white goddess who was gone. The loveliest lines that he had ever made or could make should be spoken in honour of the *Snow Lady* who had left them, but had saved them. The unborn, who would never see her, should feel tears in their hearts for her lost beauty and remember her unseen loveliness for ever because of his poem—his poem of farewell.

Though she was gone, she should belong to them for ever now, and to them and their children after them. For his poems would never again be read at Court. The village was cut off; but it was safe. There would be peace now in which to write poems.

People were running towards him. He wiped his bleeding hands on the grass; the rough rock had cut them. Choe and her father and a lot of others were round him.

"The soldiers were coming. Not one of them escaped," Kim Ho said hoarsely. "The *Snow Lady* saved us—but she has gone."

Choe's father folded his hands in his sleeves and stared with keen old eyes back along the trail down which no soldier would ever come again.

"Blessed are the ways of Wisdom!" he said solemnly. "We cannot understand them . . . We have our cattle, our poultry, our pigs and our corn. We can live happily now—if we are wise . . . Wars pass, my children, but fertility goes on for ever."

Choe and Kim Ho looked into each other's eyes. Fertility goes on for ever. In their bodies lay the seed of the future.

Choe was remembering her prayer to the *Snow Lady*. It was no longer ago than the dawn of that same day.

* * *

SQUELCH!

Archbishop Temple, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, had no compassion on people who bored him. A woman, sitting next him one night at dinner gave him a long and wearisome description of a railway accident. Her aunt, she said, had been in the train, and though there were several people killed in the compartment next to hers, she was quite uninjured. "Wasn't that lucky?" she asked.

"Not knowing your aunt, I can't say," replied the Primate.

Told by E. F. BENSON, in *Final Edition*

COME LIVE WITH ME

My heart — and hand — upon it!

I have a little hut in the wood . . . a little hidden lowly hut, which owns the paths that you may reach ; fair is the place, the green wall of an oak against the storm.

Tame swine lie down around it, goats, boars, wild swine, grazing deer, a badger's brood.

A clutch of eggs, honey, produce of wild onions, God has sent it ; sweet apples, red whortleberries, crowberries.

Beer with herbs, a dish of strawberries, coloured dainties ; haws, yew berries, sloes, nuts.

A heavy bowl-full, goodly hazel-nuts, early young corn, brown acorns, manes of briar, fine sweet-tangle.

In pleasant summer with its coloured mantle, with good-tasting savour, there are pignuts, wild marjoram, fresh leeks—green purity.

The songs of the bright red-breasted folk, a beloved movement, the carol of the thrush, familiar cuckoos above my house.

Swarms of bees, beetles, soft music of the world, a gentle humming ; wild geese, ducks, shortly before All Hallows, music of the dark torrent.

Fair white birds come, cranes, seagulls, the sea sings to them, no mournful music ; brown fowl out of the red heather.

The voice of the wind against the branchy wood, grey with cloud ; cascades of the river, the swan's song, lovely music, that is not hired.

. . . I fare no worse than you do.

Author Unknown, 9th Century, Translated from the Irish by
KENNETH HURLSTONE JACKSON

Credit Enough

(*To her I very much respect—Mrs. Margaret Clark.*)

Lovely, and Oh that I could write loving Mrs. Margaret Clark, I pray you let Affection excuse Presumption. Having been so happy as to enjoy the Sight of your sweet Countenance and comely Body sometimes when I had occasion to buy Treacle or Liquorish Powder at the apothecary's shop, I am so enamoured of you, that I can no more keep close my flaming Desire to become your Servant. And I am the more bold now to write to your sweet self, because

I am now my own Man, and may match where I please; for my Father is taken away; and now I am come to my living, which is ten yard Land in our Field but is as well worth ten Pound a year as a Thief's worth a Halter; and all my brothers and sisters are provided for; besides I have good Household stuff, though I say it, both Brass and Pewter, Linnens and Woollens; and though my House be thatched, yet if you and I match, it shall go hard but you and I will have one half of it slated. If you shall think well of this Motion, I will wait upon you as soon as my new Cloathes is made, and Hay Harvest is in.

I do not think but that if you and I can agree to marry, and lay our Means together, I shall be made a grand Juryman e'er two or three Years come about, and that will be a great Credit to us. If I could have got a Messenger for Sixpence, I would have sent me on Purpose, and some trifle or other for a token of my Love; but I hope there is nothing lost for that neither.

Yours, if my own,

MR. GABRIEL BULLOCK
now my father is dead.

Swepston, Leicestershire.

When the Coal Carts come, I shall send oftener; and may come in one of them myself.

Quoted in *The Second Post* by E. V. LUCAS, 1868–1938

Opportunity Knocks

Prithee, pretty maiden, will you marry me?
(Hey, but I'm hopeful, willow, willow waly!)
I may say, at once, I'm a man of propertee—
Hey willow waly, O!
Money, I despise it,
But many people prize it,
Hey willow waly, O!

W. S. GILBERT, 1836–1911, *Patience: or, Bunthorne's Bride*

S.O.S.

Have you any husbands to spare for the North?
(Middle Aged)

Extract from a letter to a marriage bureau, quoted by MARY OLIVER *and* MARY BENEDETTA *in "Marriage Bureau."*

As You Were !

" Minnie," Rupert says, " I love you with all my heart and soul, and now that my future is open before me, bright and shining, I wish you to be my wife, and never mind what your papa says to the contrary about Gus Schmelk. He is strictly a wrong gee, I mean Gus Schmelk," Rupert says. " Let us be married at once, and my friend, my pal, my comrade, Mr. Calvin Colby, will stand up with us as my best man."

" Rupert," Miss Minnie Schultz says, " if you are here fifteen minutes ago, I will undoubtedly accept you. When you call me on the telephone and make an appointment for an interview with me, I say to myself, I wait all these years for Rupert to speak, and now I will give him just one more hour of my life, and not one minute more, for another is requesting my hand. On the expiration of the hour to the dot," Miss Minnie Schultz says, " I pledge myself to him. Rupert," she says, " as far as I am personally concerned you are a goner ! "

DAMON RUNYON, 1884–1946, *Take It Easy*

Hitherto

I could never seek to please
One, or many Mistresses ;
Never like their lips, to swear
Oil of Roses still smelt there.

But have hitherto lived free,
As the air that circles me :
And kept credit with my heart,
Neither broke i' th' whole, or part.

ROBERT HERRICK, 1591–1674

. . . Until Seventy Times

Mr. Finching proposed seven times—once in a hackney coach, once in a boat, once in a pew, once on a donkey at Tunbridge Wells, and the rest on his knees.

CHARLES DICKENS, 1812–1870, *Little Dorrit*

Cheating the Fiddler

" Then we will have tonight ! " we said.
" Tomorrow—may we not be dead ? "
The morrow touched our eyes ; and found
Us walking firm above the ground,
Our pulses quick, our blood alight.
Tomorrow's gone—we'll have tonight !

DOROTHY PARKER

THE CAT WHO LOVED CARNATIONS

"I told you, Tim," she said. "I warned you!"

by RICHARD STERN

TIM McCOY came into the bedroom with two cocktails in his hands. He gave one to his wife Philippa. He kissed her. Then he sat down on the edge of his own bed and drank deeply. "Ah!" he said. He reached down and threw off one shoe. He wiggled his toes. "When my biography is written, this week will go down to posterity as—"

"Tim," Philippa said, "Aunt Lucy is coming."

There was silence. Tim stared into his drink. His lips moved, but no sound came forth. He raised his head and studied his wife. Then he drank again.

"Well," Philippa said, "it isn't my doing. She just wrote and said she was coming. The letter came this afternoon. She'll be here in the morning." She picked the letter from her lap, and waved it for Tim's inspection. The purple ink was unmistakable.

Tim drank again. He took off his other shoe, and stared at his toes.

"All right," Philippa said, "what could I do? She's already on her way. She has an appointment with, oh, someone, and—"

"I thought she was rearing turkeys."

"She stopped that." Philippa paused. She looked down into her glass. "She's been studying Arabic."

"In order to talk with this, oh, someone—is that it?" He shook his head slowly. Philippa was still staring down into her glass. "That makes it pretty clear," Tim said. He finished his drink and stood up. "If the schemes that have been concocted to put the bite on Aunt Lucy's money were laid end to end— That lamasery in Tibet, the blue blooded Pekinese, you remember him?"

"Tim! She's a dear old lady."

"That's what I said. She doesn't play with a full pack of cards, but she's a dear old lady." He paused. "Rich, too. The only thing is, it'll all go to endow a home for earthworms, or something."

Philippa breathed heavily through her nose. "I don't like it any better—" she began, and there she stopped. Miss Henderson was standing in the doorway. Miss Henderson was nurse to Thomas,

the McCoy baby. Her expression was polite but determined. " Yes ? " said Philippa. " Come in, Miss Henderson."

Miss Henderson marched forward two full paces. She halted. " It is not my nature to complain, Mrs. McCoy," she said. " I like cats. I even like Joe."

Philippa looked at Tim. Tim looked at the ceiling. " Yes ? " Philippa said.

" This afternoon," Miss Henderson said, " I received through the post a sachet. It was a handmade sachet, Mrs. McCoy. A relative of mine in the north made it for me. I left it on my bed while I fed Thomas." She paused. " Joe stole it, Mrs. McCoy. He ran out of the window with it. I saw him."

Tim said, " Perhaps he has an old fur coat he wants to keep fresh."

" That isn't funny, Tim," Philippa said.

" No," Tim said, " I suppose it isn't." He looked at his empty glass ; in the bottom of it he saw Aunt Lucy. " I'm out of jokes." He looked at Miss Henderson. " I'll investigate."

He slipped into his shoes and went out through the sitting room and the dining room. He left his empty glass in the pantry, and he went through the kitchen, past Cook who muttered and mumbled to herself at the sink. By the stove Vincent, the McCoy monkey, was earnestly polishing off his nightly bowl of milk and dark rum. Joe was not present. Vincent raised his head and spoke briefly. Tim went on outside.

There on the back porch he called. There was no answer. He went out towards the tool shed, searched through the carnations which were Joe's especial joy, and found nothing. He started back for the house, and there on the lawn beside the pond, he saw Joe.

Joe's chest was low, his rear end high, his stub tail aloft like a guidon. Between his great forepaws he pinned something darkly purple, water stained, and as Tim watched, Joe rubbed his face against it, first one cheek and then the other, all the while purring loudly. He caught the thing in his teeth, shook it once, set it down again and began to wash it with his tongue. He lifted his hind feet in a little dance of ecstasy. The purring rose in pitch and volume. " My goodness," Tim said. He advanced a little. " Here, Joe ! "

Joe raised his head. Still pinning the sachet between his forepaws, he regarded Tim without expression. The purring died away.

" Now, look," Tim said. He moved steadily forward. He held out his hand. " Please."

Joe lowered his head. He caught the sachet between his jaws. He stood there, motionless, watching, and his stub tail was beginning to twitch.

" Now look here," Tim said. " I'll try to settle it for you. I'll

try to mollify Miss Henderson and Philippa. I'll explain that it was a mistake, that you thought the thing was yours. I'll—" He stopped there. Joe was gone, trotting swiftly across the lawn, the sachet still in his mouth. "Here!" Tim called. Joe went up the trunk of the large tree, along the roof of the tool shed and over the fence beyond. He disappeared.

"Well, I'm damned!" Tim said. He went slowly back into the house and mixed himself another drink as preparation for his report on the failure of his mission.

In the next garden, Joe, secure from pursuit, lay down beneath a bush and dropped the sachet between his forepaws. He cradled it thus. He washed it. He rubbed his cheeks against it. He purred to it softly and buried his nose in it and breathed deeply, inhaling its delicious fragrance. Not since his first discovery of the carnations—so long ago that was now—had anything smelled so good.

The next day was Saturday. Tim sat at the breakfast table with the newspapers, his fourth cup of coffee and his fifth cigarette, thereby delaying the clearing away. Cook muttered to herself in the pantry, wondering yet again what it was that prompted a woman, of her own volition, to have a man about the house. Miss Henderson, bearing the remnants of Thomas' breakfast, marched past the table, kitchen bound, and she, too, but for a different reason, regarded Tim without enthusiasm. The loss of the sachet galled. Joe had purloined it, that much she had seen; but Tim had failed to get it back; the two, then, the cat and the man, shared equally in the blame. She went on into the pantry, keeping her thoughts to herself.

And then came Philippa, already dressed for the day, her mind abristle with little chores of preparation. She stopped at the table. "Just take your time," she said.

Tim nodded, not looking up. "Thanks."

"There's nothing to be done in the house, of course. Nothing at all."

"That's fine," Tim said absently.

"Tim!" Philippa stamped her foot. "Tim! Will you stop dawdling!"

Tim raised his head in mild surprise.

"Aunt Lucy is coming," Philippa said. "And you—you aren't even dressed yet."

Tim looked down at himself. "Shirt," he said, "trousers, even shoes. What more could she ask—a toga?"

"A tie."

"No." He shook his head. "Not on Saturday. Tell her to go somewhere else if—"

"And, Tim—" Philippa paused, and her voice changed in tone.

" She doesn't like cats, do you remember ? They bother her. Will you see that Joe—" She paused again, and her mind changed direction smoothly. " About that sachet—"

" Joe and I will stay outside," Tim said. " We'll sit in the carnations together, me without a tie and Joe with whatever he's got that's obnoxious. How's that ? " He watched the door to the pantry close, and he heard the feminine talk begin in a small spontaneous burst. He sighed. He finished his coffee and pushed back his chair. " It might not be such a bad idea after all," he said . . .

It was mid-morning. Tim sat in the sun beside the pond, Vincent upon his knee. The sun was warm, and a breeze stirred gently. Vincent plucked idly with his small fingers at the crease of Tim's trousers. From time to time he lifted his head and watched Tim's face. His attitude was that of a disciple harking to the words of the sage.

" It appears," Tim said, " that life is a vast succession of crises, some major, some minor." He paused and rubbed the soft fur of Vincent's black skull cap. Vincent watched with bright, adoring eyes. " Sachets from the north, aunts, Joe and his—" He stopped there. Joe was coming slowly out of the shrubbery, walking in a leisurely manner, his whiskers comfortably curled. " Well," Tim said. " Good morning, you thief."

Joe sat down. He lifted one massive forepaw, turned it this way and that, admiring it. Then he spread the toes and, with a great show of indifference, began to wash between the pads.

"As I was saying," Tim said, "you aren't popular, Joe. Why d'you do it ? "

Joe said nothing. He finished scrubbing between his pads, and began to wash his face, concentrating on the task, his eyes almost closed.

" What was in the sachet ? " Tim asked.

Still Joe was silent, and Vincent stirred uneasily. " All right," Tim said, " don't tell me. Don't co-operate with your lawyer. But remember, when you come up before the court—"

From the window, Philippa said, " Tim. Aunt Lucy is here."

" Oh," Tim said. He put Vincent down on the grass. He stood up. Joe suspended his bath to watch. " Now comes the major dilemma," Tim said. " Look, fellows, will you stay here, out of the way ? We don't want a real crisis."

Joe resumed his bath. Vincent plucked at a blade of grass.

" Don't say I didn't warn you," Tim said. He headed for the house.

Aunt Lucy was small. Her hair was grey and she wore it in a

severe fashion. She gave off a faint aroma of lavender. " Timothy," she said, and she sniffed, a small, disapproving sound.

" How are the turkeys ? " Tim asked. " Multiplying ? "

Aunt Lucy sniffed again, louder this time.

Philippa said, " You must be tired."

Lucy fixed Philippa with her eyes. " Fatigue is entirely a matter of the mind. One educates one's mind, as I am educating mine, and such mundane weaknesses as fatigue and hunger cease to exist."

" Oh," Philippa said.

Tim asked, " How about thirst ? Can you eliminate that, too ? "

Philippa said, " Tim."

" I shall go to my room," Aunt Lucy stated. " I shall meditate."

" Of course," Philippa said.

" Until the Master arrives."

Tim opened his mouth. He closed it again. " The Master ? " he asked. " Who—"

" I'll show you to your room," Philippa said. She had Aunt Lucy's elbow and was steering her quickly out of range. " I'm sure you'll be comfortable."

Aunt Lucy's voice trailed over her shoulder. " Comfort is a matter of the mind. The soul must rise above such petty things."

Tim fled to the kitchen and a cool beer.

He was in the study when Philippa appeared. He was staring out of the open window at the lawn, at the carnations. His beer sat at his elbow. He looked at his wife. " Well ? " he said. " Is she meditating ? "

Philippa sat down on the settee. She picked up his beer and took a long pull at it. She turned the glass round and round in her hands, then drank again. " I'm worried, Tim."

" The Master," Tim said. " Who is he ? "

Philippa shook her head. " Ali Bey, or something like that. He's the one she's been writing to."

" Barefoot ? Lives in a cave ? Eats nuts ? Sometimes I think—"

" He's coming here to see her."

Tim was silent for a long time. He took the beer from Philippa's hands and drank deeply. He gave it back to her. " It's a nice day," he said. " And I have been meditating. And a message has come to me. It says that I'd better play golf this afternoon. It says—"

Philippa had raised her head. She was looking at him now and her eyes were bright, very bright indeed, and filled with tears. " I'm frightened, Tim. This isn't like the other things she's got into. It's been going on for some time, by letter, and she's really convinced. He is going to build a Temple of Peace, and—"

" —And it takes money," Tim said. He took the beer and finished it. " Well," he said, and from the front of the house there

came a scream, loud and vigorous. " Oh, my gosh," Tim said. " She meditated too hard." He moved towards the sound.

Aunt Lucy's door was already open, and Aunt Lucy stood beside it, breathing hard. The smell of lavender filled the room. Aunt Lucy was pointing. " What is that ? " she demanded. " That monster ? "

Joe was crouched on the bed. His head was low. His eyes were partially closed and he was sniffing, and his whiskers twinked ecstatically with each breath.

" It's—it's Joe," Philippa said. " Tim's cat."

" I was meditating," said Aunt Lucy. She had herself under control now. " I opened my eyes and he was looking at me. Right here." She held her hand almost against her nose. She glared at Tim and Philippa.

" Come on, Joe," Tim said. He clucked. " Come on." Joe jumped down. He crossed the room slowly, reluctantly. He stepped carefully over Aunt Lucy's feet, drew his stub tail against her ankles, and followed Tim out into the hall.

" I'll close your window," Philippa said. " Then he won't bother you again."

" Do," said Aunt Lucy. She closed her eyes, breathed slowly, rhythmically. Her lips moved as she counted. " I must regain my state of equanimity," she said.

Tim led Joe to the kitchen. He got out milk and warmed it on the stove. He poured it into the white bowl and laced it well with dark rum and carried it out on to the back porch. There he squatted down beside it while Joe began to drink. " I don't blame you a bit," Tim said. " She is something to see, and the meditation act is probably a beauty. But no more. You've had your look. Do you hear ? "

Joe raised his head. " All right," Tim said. " Just remember." He went back into the house.

Joe finished his punch. He licked the bowl clean, and wiped the last delicious drop from his chin, and scrubbed at his cheeks and at his whiskers until they too were immaculate once more. Then he trotted forth, the rum warm and pleasant in his stomach, infinite peace in his mind.

He went through the carnations, scarcely slowing his gait. He went up the large tree and on to the roof of the tool shed, and over the fence. Beneath the bush where he had taken the sachet last night, his nose took over and he searched this way and that for his treasure, finding only the satin bag itself, torn and emptied by his own claws. A faint scent still clung, but it was a poor pallid thing by comparison with the lovely reek of Aunt Lucy.

He chirruped once or twice in his disappointment, and then returned to his own garden, where Vincent came to join him to talk of this and that, to discourse upon the beauty of the sunlight dancing on the surface of the pond, to point out the erratic course of a drifting butterfly, to search through the grass blades for ants and other small beasts who dwelt therein. And so the afternoon passed, and the large shiny car drew up in front of the house, but neither Joe nor Vincent took any notice.

Tim sat in the sitting room with the visitor, who was tall and darkly handsome, immaculately dressed in a flannel suit and silk turban of price, upon which glistened a large red stone. "We're right out of ambrosia," Tim said. "How about a beer?"

Ali's voice was deep, melodious. "Thank you, no." He smiled faintly and made a small gesture with one fine hand. His position was neither stiff nor relaxed; his aura of confidence, of inner calm, filled the room. "You are wondering, Mr. McCoy, about the purpose of my visit?"

"Now that you mention it," Tim said, "a little curiosity has drifted through my mind."

"I have watched it," said Ali Bey. Again he smiled, and his eyes beneath the sparkling jewel of his turban, seemed to glow. "To those who possess the knowledge, Mr. McCoy, all things are plain."

"Look," Tim said. "I don't know what your game is. I can guess, of course." He paused. "The old lady isn't exactly crazy. Perhaps she's lost a marble or two along the way, but—" He stopped there and shook his head. "Oh, hell," he said. "I give up. She wouldn't listen to me if I tried to explain things to her."

And from the doorway, Aunt Lucy said, "What things, Timothy?"

They both turned. Ali Bey looked at the old lady. His smile was serene, convincing. "Suspicions, my daughter. The petty suspicions of ignorance, of scepticism." He lifted one hand. "But it is of no matter. The enlightened mind is above annoyance."

Aunt Lucy considered the statement. "Any kind of annoyance?"

"Any kind, my daughter."

"Cats," Aunt Lucy said. She was impressed, watching him, feeling the force of his serenity, his detachment, his lofty view. "Can't abide them. Sneaky things." She thought of Joe.

"In ancient Egypt," Ali Bey said, "whence all knowledge springs, the cat was regarded as a deity. The great Sphinx—"

"Sneaky things," Aunt Lucy said again. "Always caterwauling, always running away—useless." She looked at Tim and she sniffed. She looked at Ali Bey once more, convinced by his bearing, by his words, by the long, patient correspondence which

had preceded this meeting. One had to be careful if one had wealth ; Aunt Lucy had learned this lesson long ago. The world, it appeared, was filled with knaves, with unprincipled scoundrels who spoke glibly of schemes, of panaceas for the ills of mankind, all of which required money, and most of which were spurious. The only true criterion, Aunt Lucy had long ago decided, was the man himself, his bearing, his attitude, his personality. She studied Ali Bey now. Deceit, fraud, it was clear, would be beneath such a person. " We'll go into the study," she said. " We can talk there." She looked at Tim again, and she sniffed once more. She led the way to the study.

Philippa sat down on the arm of the sofa. She looked at Tim. " She's still angry about Joe. I told you, Tim, I warned you."

" Joe wanted to watch her meditate. So did I. It must have been a thing to see."

" Tim ! "

" Well," Tim said. He looked at the closed study door. " There's nothing we can do now." He looked at Philippa, " *Fleece*, I think, is the word. It'll be like taking milk from a kitten."

" If it hadn't been for Joe," Philippa said, " she wouldn't be so stubborn. I tried to talk to her."

" Aunt Lucy," Tim said, " was born stubborn. She was also born with a hole in her head, and Joe had nothing to do with that."

Philippa shifted her attack neatly. " He stole Miss Henderson's sachet, didn't he ? Right off her bed."

" That," said Tim, " has nothing at all to do with Aunt Lucy."

Out on the lawn beside the pond, Joe lay at full length, his chin resting on his forepaws, his eyes fixed upon Vincent who was turning back-flips in an all-out effort to entertain. Joe's thoughts were deep and dark, having in them nothing of frivolity, nothing of play. He had tried Aunt Lucy's window and found it closed. He lay quietly now, pondering this, and the breeze moved gently across the garden, bringing with it the spiciness of the carnations, the sounds of a bird, the gentle murmur of Ali Bey's deep voice, the scent of Aunt Lucy's lavender.

It was this last which touched Joe's fancy, which set his whiskers to twinking. Slowly he rose to his feet, his head lifted, his nose working delicately, sampling the evidence. Vincent, ignored, ceased his acrobatics and sat down, his hands clasping his knees and his tail wrapped neatly round his feet. He watched Joe and he chattered softly to himself. Joe chirruped, a small, eager sound. His stub tail rose like a flag. He started towards the house, trotting briskly.

In the study, Aunt Lucy sat primly in a small occasional chair.

Ali Bey stood before her, smiling. "You have questions, my daughter?"

"Yes," Aunt Lucy said. She was looking up at him, her head lifted in an unnatural position. The jewel in his turban sparkled in the light like a small red mirror, disrupting her vision, confusing her mind. It was of no matter, Aunt Lucy thought, and she tried to ignore the jewel, to concentrate upon her questions. But the questions eluded her and only the jewel remained; that, and Ali Bey's eyes, which had enlarged themselves astonishingly into great bottomless pools of fascination.

Ali Bey said, "It is peace, my daughter, which we all seek, peace and the true enlightenment. To most it comes but rarely as during sleep, sleep when the mind frees itself, sleep when the body's cares are laid aside, sleep . . . sleep . . . sleep . . ." The jewel glittered blindingly.

It was time to blink, Aunt Lucy thought, time to look away, to consider the logic of all this. But her fascination held her, and the jewel seemed to grow, and the eyes stared into her own, and the voice continued soothingly: "One can lift oneself above the toil and the travail of mere living, achieve the true state, the state of peace, almost the state of sleep, perpetual sleep."

Aunt Lucy's lips moved, forming the word *yes*, but no sound came out.

It was going to be easy, Ali Bey thought, easier, even, than he had anticipated, and the adding machine in his mind clicked smoothly, revising upward the amount of the original mulcting. Ten thousand would not be too much, five thousand for the Temple of Peace, plans and blueprints of which he could show her, if she asked. But she would not. And then small driblets, artfully procured from time to time, two thousand today, three thousand next month, four thousand at the next bite.

"You are approaching it now, my daughter," Ali Bey said. "You are relaxed, quiescent, peaceful . . ." The sibilants hissed softly, drowsily, and the jewel seemed to grow and grow until its light filled Aunt Lucy's mind. Maybe six thousand would not be too much, Ali Bey thought. It was then that Joe appeared on the windowsill, and crouched there, his eyes half closed, his nose working ecstatically.

Ali Bey saw him. Ali Bey's voice continued, without pause, low pitched, soporific; but Ali Bey's mind took swift cognizance of Joe, considered various possibilities and discarded them all, settled at last upon complete disregard. It was a mistake.

Joe eyed Aunt Lucy. She was motionless. And she reeked so splendidly. He dropped into the room, glanced once at Ali Bey and decided to ignore him. He moved forward slowly, his whiskers

curled briskly, his stub tail high. Behind him, Vincent appeared upon the windowsill. He paused there, surveyed the scene and found in it potentialities. He sat down to watch.

Aunt Lucy stared into Ali Bey's eyes ; her mind immersed itself in his voice. The scent of lavender filled the room, and Joe, following his nose, closed in upon the source. Three times now he had encountered this magnificent fragrance, and twice the ecstasy had ended too soon ; the torn sachet had been a disappointment, the hullabaloo in Aunt Lucy's bedroom an outrage. There was determination now in the set of his great shoulders, in the lowering of his head, in the twinking whiskers. He stood beside Aunt Lucy's ankle. A small purr began, deep within his furry chest.

Ali Bey shifted his weight carefully. His voice continued : "You are sleepy, my daughter, drowsy and at peace. You are approaching the ultimate state, and your mind is beginning to soar . . ." His weight was entirely on his right foot now, the left foot free. He was sweating ; perspiration glistened on his forehead and beneath his eyes. He moved his left foot forward until its toe rested against Joe's flank. Joe pushed himself against it, finding the pressure pleasurable. On the windowsill, Vincent shivered in anticipatory glee. Ali Bey moved the foot back two or three inches. He had the range now. Holding himself rigid, swinging his leg only from the knee, he kicked. It was his second mistake. Tim, Philippa, Vincent himself, Cook—any of these, or anything in the neighbourhood which walked on four legs—could have predicted for Ali Bey's benefit the next move.

Joe spun half round, the purr cut off short. He saw Ali Bey's foot, his unprotected ankle. He chose the ankle for his counter attack, and he slapped it smartly three times, claws extended, drawing, in that brief period, fifteen lines of blood. He heard Ali Bey's high pitched squeal, which was as it should be, and he moved forward to press his advantage.

Aunt Lucy stirred in her chair. From somewhere, far distant, her mind returned as the squeal echoed and re-echoed in the small room. She looked round, took in the scene, searched in vain for the glittering jewel, which was now only a small red piece of glass set in a turban ; listened in vain for the strong commanding voice, which had worked its way towards falsetto and was uttering angry, outraged sounds instead of soothing wisdom. "Well," Aunt Lucy said, and she closed her mouth like a small trap.

Ali Bey, crouching, kicked again, viciously this time. He missed. Joe swarmed aboard the foot and rode it back to position, swinging his blows with the full force of his big shoulders, with the full fury of his rage. He dismounted neatly and circled to his enemy's rear, crouched, and gathered himself. Ali Bey folded at the waist, clasped

both ankles with his hands, thereby elevating his undefended rear area. It was his third mistake. Joe pressed his attack, and the rout was on, and from his seat on the windowsill, Vincent chattered encouragement, danced up and down, calling upon the world to witness the splendour of his spectacle. The world, or, at least, Tim and Philippa, were neck and neck to the door, and there they paused and stared.

Ali Bey was in the far corner. His turban was askew. He was crouching, holding his fine hands before him in an attitude of supplication. Joe crouched on the rug. Joe's big head was low and the muscles of his shoulders were bunched, and his growl rolled and echoed through the room. His stub tail twitched with rage.

"Take him away!" Ali Bey said. "Please take him away! Please!" He sounded like an ordinary mortal tormented beyond endurance; the fact was clear and plain to all. Gone the lofty detachment, gone the inspiring confidence. "Please!" Ali Bey said. Aunt Lucy sniffed. She sniffed again.

Tim said, "Are you having deity trouble, Ali Bey? The cat-god displeased with you? Quote him some wisdom." He snapped his fingers, and Joe, heeding, relaxed a trifle.

Aunt Lucy stood up. She looked at Ali Bey. She sniffed yet a third time. She marched out of the room, head high, illusions low.

It was later, much later. Tim and Philippa sat in the sitting room. They listened politely and attentively to Aunt Lucy's version of the affair. "The man is an impostor." Aunt Lucy said. "I recognized it immediately." She almost believed it herself. "I was unmasking him when the cat appeared." She paused. "Cats," she said. "I don't like them, and they don't like me."

And then came Joe, his stomach warm and pleasant from its second potion of rum. He paused in the doorway and looked round; his nose twitched once, twice, a third time. He curled his whiskers and tasted the fragrance. He located it and headed for it at a trot.

"Cats," said Aunt Lucy, "are—" She stopped there and bent over to stare at Joe, who was rubbing against her ankles, leaning into his work, giving off a throbbing rumble of a purr. "Well," Aunt Lucy said, "I never, in all my born—" Joe jumped on to the arm of her chair. He sniffed at her. He stepped daintily into her lap and curled himself, looked up into Aunt Lucy's face and purred at her. His whiskers twinked and he opened and closed his great forepaws. "He likes me," Aunt Lucy said. There was wonder in her voice.

Tim looked at Philippa. Philippa looked at Tim. They said nothing, and Joe's rumbling purr was the only sound in the room.

"Well!" Aunt Lucy said again. She looked at Joe. She lifted one hand, touched Joe's head experimentally. The purr rumbled

and throbbed like the beat of distant drums. Aunt Lucy raised her head. She looked at Tim. She sniffed. "Timothy," she said, and there she paused. She sniffed again. "Are they hard to bring up?" she asked. She snapped her mouth shut. She waited. Tim's face was blank. "Well?" Aunt Lucy said. "Are they? Cats, I mean."

Tim took a deep breath. He shook his head slowly. He got his voice under control. "No harder than turkeys."

"I just thought I'd ask," Aunt Lucy said.

Tim nodded. And Joe purred on.

* * *

RODGER GILES SURGIN

Parish clark and skule master. Groser & Hundertaker respectably informs Ladys & Gentlemen that he drors teef without wateing a minit. Applies laches every hour. Blisters on the lowest tarms, and visicks for a penny a peace. He sells godfathers kordales. Kuts Korns. Bunyons. Doctors hosses. Clips Donkies wance a munth & undertakes to luke arter every bodies naylas by the ear, joes-harp, penny wissels. Brass Kanelsticks, fryin pans & other moozikal Hinstrumints hat grately reydoosed figers. Young ladys & gentlemen larnes their grammur and langeudge in the purtiest mannar. Also grate care taken off their morrels and spellin. Also zarm-zinging taychingthe base vial. And oll other zorts of fancy works. Quadrils pokers weazles and all country dances tort at home and abroad at Pertekshun perfumery and snuff in all its branches as times is cruel bad. I begs to teel ee that I has just beginned to sell all sorts of stashonary ware, cox, hens vouls, pigs and all other kinds of poultry. Blackin-brishes. Herrins. Coles, scrubbin-brishes. Trakel and Godley Bukes and Bibles. Mise traps brick dist. Whisker seeds Morrel Pokkerankerchers. and all zorts of swatemaits including taters sassages and other garden stuff. Bakky zizars. Lampoyle tay kittles and other intoxzikatin likkers, a dale of fruit, hats. Zongs hareoyle. pattins bukkits. grindstones and other aitables. Korn and bunyon zalve and all hardware. I has laid in a large azzortment of trype, dogs mate. lollipops. ginger-beer matches and other pickles. Such as Hepson salts hoysters, Wrinzer sope, Anzetrar. old rags bot and zold here and nowhere else. New laid Heggs by me Rodger Giles singing birds keeped sich as howls donkies paykox. Lobsters. crickets. Also a stock of celebrated brader. I taches grography rithmetic cowstics jimnasticks and other chynee sticks.

Gode save thee Kinge.

(*Signboard discovered in a Cornish Village. Now in the Horniman Museum, London.*)

MASTER OF RINGSMARK

A matter, you understand, of the utmost discretion!

by PHILIP JOHN STEAD

THE Executioner of Ringsmark considered the window above him without joy. It was a small window, and there were iron bars across it.

This was a sorry state of affairs: a Master Executioner, with forty years' lawful toil behind him in the skilled professional mystery of decapitation with the axe, not to mention several incidental experiences with the rack, the iron boot, the thumb-screw and the wheel, and now he was shut up in a cell like a common criminal. It was a terrible thing for a Civil Servant of his status and experience.

In Ringsmark they did not shut people up to no purpose, either. The ruling Margrave was a man of blood and he did not burden his taxpayers with the maintenance of a large prison population. Had he not flogged his own son, Prince Karl, almost to death, in sight of the whole court, because he had caught him playing the violin? How, then, should the Margrave be merciful to rogues? Gaol in Ringsmark, in fact, spelt speedy release: either one went into the Margrave's army, or one went straight to the scaffold.

The two alternatives were generally considered equally appalling, as the Margrave held strong views on military service. But there was no question of an alternative for the Executioner; he had been categorically sentenced to the block. It was a cruel thought that he would be executed by his own assistant, an inept young man, who had been known to make as many as twenty strokes before effecting a complete decapitation.

But what could one expect nowadays? The Margrave's servants were poorly paid, and the assistant was as good as could be got for the money. There were few craftsmen who loved their work as the Executioner did. Even he, however, knew the chill of penury, and when he had been given the chance to make a respectable sum of money on the side, he had taken it. He had had no reason to believe that his absence would be noticed or that he would be wanted to officiate in the square during that particular forty eight hours. And he needed the money so badly!

The Executioner had a daughter, and the marriage of Executioners' children was always a problem for the parents. For who would marry the daughter of the man whom all the citizens held in such loathing that they would leave any tavern he entered, and spit when he passed them in the street? The marriage alliances of the Executioners always took place within the ranks of their own profession, and it happened that the Executioner had recently had an offer for the girl from his colleague, the Master of Breslau. The money would have made up the sum for her dowry. Naturally he took the chance to earn it.

Perversely, though, during his absence, the Margrave's Judge had made a clean sweep of the gaol, and when the Executioner was needed to bring the business to a conclusion, neither he nor his axe could be found. Therefore the Judge had made out a warrant for his arrest and when he returned he found two grim familiars of the court drinking wine in his house. They had confiscated the hard earned money and incarcerated him immediately. Now it was only a matter of time.

The Executioner permitted himself the unusual luxury of thought. It was his habit not to think, and considering the frequency with which the Margrave called on him to perform his office, this was probably just as well. But now he thought about the elegant gentleman in the richly-lined cloak and silk suit who had come to his house at midnight to make the offer to him. An honest, open-handed gentleman indeed, who had kissed his daughter and drunk to her mother's memory. A gentleman who had taken the precaution of coming in a mask, which he had kept on, reasonably enough, after all, considering the nature of his mission.

Private performances were by no means unknown to the Executioner. Sometimes the Margrave had required his services in cases in which it had been considered inexpedient for the issue to be clouded by judicial proceedings. There had been the money-lender to whom his Highness had owed an inconveniently large amount; there had been the narrow-minded and unpatriotic nobleman who had taken exception to the Margrave's gallantries with his wife. But even though these were secret executions, they were still matters of State. What the elegant gentleman who had come at midnight had proposed was of a different order. And how agreeably he had broached the matter!

"The Master of Ringsmark is famous all over Germany," he said, "as the most accomplished member of his distinguished profession."

"Your Excellency is too kind," rumbled the Executioner, wiping his enormous hands on his leather jerkin, "but you are not alone in the opinion. In fact, my esteemed colleague, the Master of Breslau,

has just expressed a desire to betroth himself to my daughter."

It was then that the gentleman had mentioned that he might put the Executioner in the way of earning a hundred crowns—if the Executioner were not too busy.

"I have no engagements this week," admitted the Executioner.

"And if you do not mind a day's journey there and back . . ." hazarded the gentleman. The Executioner confessed he had a passion for travel.

"And at the end of the journey, a hundred crowns," said the gentleman pleasantly, "provided you operate with your accustomed skill, and of course preserve complete discretion upon a subject to be supplied by my friends and me."

"I shall want more," the Executioner said, "if the subject has to be tortured as well."

An expression of disgust twisted the gentleman's handsome mouth. He flushed, and his hand clenched on the hilt of his sword.

"That will not be necessary," he said shortly.

The Master Executioner bowed, and his shining head, tonsured like a monk's, bobbed past the visitor's face.

"When does your Excellency require me to start on the journey?"

"Now," said the visitor. "A coach is waiting for us."

The Executioner opened a tall cupboard and took out the axe, with its broad moon blade.

"Ground yesterday," he said complacently, "after I despatched the alderman who wouldn't pay his taxes." He wrapped a greasy cloth lovingly round the blade.

"At your Excellency's service," he said, bowing low. He bowed so low that he noticed the visitor's shoe-buckles were diamond, and it occurred to him that he might have asked more than a hundred crowns. But the Executioner was a man of his word.

The night was cold and starless. In the coach, the gentleman produced a dark cloth.

"My sole condition, Master Executioner," he said, "is that you must be blindfolded throughout both journeys." The Executioner submitted.

The coach lurched forward over the uneven cobbles.

"I suggest you go to sleep," came the gentleman's light voice. "We have far to go."

At their destination matters had been conducted with admirable efficiency. There was a room ready for the expert visitor, and a table set with ample meat and bread and wine. His employers were clearly men of understanding who did not expect good work to be done on an empty stomach.

As he ate and drank, locked in that little room, the Executioner had been visited by a qualm of fear. What if he were not suffered to return to Ringsmark when his task was accomplished? What if he were to be despatched in turn? No one knew where he was, except those in whose power he lay. He did not know himself. He only knew that they had left the cobbled streets of the city and driven fast and far along bad uneven roads and through a forest, for he had heard the winter boughs cracking and groaning in the high wind, and occasionally low branches had swept against the coach windows. But he rejected this fear. If they wanted an executioner, it was because they were averse to shedding blood themselves; otherwise they would surely have carried out the execution on their own. He had nothing to fear.

The masked man unlocked the door and entered with a sconce of candles.

"We are ready," he said. "Do not delay."

The Executioner followed him into a large hall. Its stone columns had projecting iron rings, in which pine torches had been set. The eager heads of flame devoured the darkness and the centre of the hall was alive with leaping red and yellow light. Several people, men and women, all masked, stood motionless round a dais in the centre.

The Executioner remembered an old story, often told at professional gatherings, of how many years ago, a family tribunal had tried and condemned one of their own kin and sent secretly for a public headsman to conduct the execution. Apparently he was now about to officiate at such a ceremony. The story would surely be good enough to lessen the dowry required by his colleague at Breslau.

On the dais was a block. He examined it with an approving eye. It was hollowed perfectly; no room for the victim to make inconvenient movements of the head. Against it leaned his familiar axe. He took it up, balanced it, and made a couple of swings to accustom himself to its weight.

Down the hall came a little procession, casting fantastic shadows on the stone floor as it advanced. First came a masked priest, reading his missal. Then, struggling furiously with two masked figures, one on either side, who were dragging him along, came a tall man.

The Executioner folded his bare arms conventionally, leaning them on the haft of his inverted axe. He wondered what it was that struck him as a little terrifying about the approaching victim. Then he realized.

The condemned man, whose shoulders were working so savagely, was silent. As they fought their way with him up the steps

of the dais, the Executioner saw that besides being masked the man was gagged, too.

They forced the bound figure to the block and the Executioner gave calm orders. They soon had him kneeling with his head in the prescribed position, but he still struggled, silently and terribly. His legs jerked uncontrollably, the silk stockings were torn, the silk breeches unbuckled.

The Executioner's sense of decorum was affronted by this unreasonable and futile resistance. It had always pleased him to find that men generally met death on the scaffold with a dramatic sense of their own dignity. Even so, this unbecoming situation tonight was not beyond the craftsman's experience. He directed the burlier of the two attendants to sit on the victim's calves.

It seemed that speed was the essence of his mystery, so the Executioner nodded swiftly to the priest to stand clear, made sure that no imprudent person was standing behind him, fixed his eyes on an imaginary scarlet thread across the nape of the condemned man's neck, and swung the axe.

It was a master stroke. The head fell cleanly severed ; there was a sharp whistle of expelled air from the lungs. The Executioner noticed something odd again, and again realized what it was. No one had applauded.

But the gentleman in the mask, he with the diamond buckles, mounted the dais and put a bag of coins into his hands. The Executioner disengaged his axe and followed the stranger through the silent and motionless spectators out of the hall. He put on his jerkin in the little room where he had eaten, wrapped the blade in its cloth, and was blindfolded again. Then he was guided down the stone passages, and out into the pine scented night air. A horse whimpered ; the Executioner's feet stumbled on the coach step. The journey back to Ringsmark began.

The Judge, as was his way, had looked more with anger than sorrow upon this dereliction of duty. Nine prisoners for instant execution and the executioner nowhere to be found ! Worse, no sign of the State axe ! And confusion had been more confounded by the incompetence of the Assistant Executioner, for four of the condemned had died under his clumsy ministrations on the wheel before they could be got to the block. The public had been disgusted and the Chancellor, who had offended his mistress by rising early to be present at the spectacle, which was usually a rewarding one, had given the Judge to understand that he had better exercise more control over the executive branch of his department if he did not wish to incur the Margrave's displeasure.

That was the last thing the Judge wished to do. He therefore

sentenced the delinquent Executioner the moment he appeared before him, without complicating the matter by hearing evidence or permitting a defence. The crime was palpable; one of his own servants had exposed him to risking the Margrave's displeasure; nothing less than death could be adequate.

Thus the Executioner sat waiting for death.

No one had ever escaped from the Ringsmark Gaol. Once a gaoler had been corrupted by a prisoner's friends and had smuggled in a large file. The noise of the prisoner industriously filing had been heard, and the truth had come out. The Margrave had made the gaoler swallow the file, and since then no gaoler had ever spoken a word to a prisoner.

The Executioner thought of this and sighed. He clasped his huge knotted hands on his knees. It was cold and he was hungry. There had never been any question of pampering captives by feeding them.

He did not relish the prospect of being despatched by his unsatisfactory assistant; it was an indignity. He derived a little gloomy satisfaction from the thought that the Judge would never get as good a Master Executioner again. But if he had not been so skilled, the mysterious gentleman would never have sent for him and got him into this unfortunate position.

Surely, the Executioner thought bitterly, it was no sin for a man to labour in his vocation? Merely because he was so expert, he had forfeited his secure position in the Civil Service, destroyed his daughter's hopes of marriage with the Master of Breslau, lost the hundred crowns, and was now about to lose his head.

The summit of his misery was reached when he heard a raucous voice echoing in the stone vaults of the gaol: "Make way for his Highness the Margrave!"

The Executioner got stiffly to his feet, which was difficult because of the heavy fetters. There was the rattle of arms, the grating of great keys, the clang of iron doors. It was just his accursed luck that his grim sovereign had chosen today to visit the gaol. His Highness always signalized these visits by ordering some refinement of torture for any prisoner in whose welfare he took a personal interest. At the thought of his hapless assistant trying to carry out such refinements, the Executioner could not repress a professional shudder.

The royal party halted outside the Executioner's cell; he was the only inmate of the gaol. The gaoler entered and knelt beside him. With his hammer he struck off the irons, nearly breaking bones as he did it. The Executioner was not pleased. When a man was unfettered, it was for the iron boot, the rack and the wheel.

The Margrave came into the cell, the gold and enamel star

blazing on his breast. The Executioner fell to his knees at his feet. Then he dared to raise his eyes.

"Prince Karl!" he breathed.

"My father is dead, Master Executioner," said the new Margrave. "A fatal accident at his hunting lodge in the forest. I pardon all prisoners today."

There was a dull metallic sound; the gaoler had put on the bench the confiscated bag of coins.

"Long live your Highness," whispered the Executioner, as his new sovereign turned and went out through the open door.

It was strange, he thought, that the diamond buckles he was wearing were exactly similar to those the masked gentleman had worn, but he was a loyal subject and the thought never visited him again.

* * *

ANSWERS to HOUSE TO LET! on page 10

1. *The Boy whose name was Jim, in the "Cautionary Verse," by Hilaire Belloc.*
2. *"Lucy," in the poem "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways," by William Wordsworth.*
3. *The dwarfs Alliolyle, Lallerie and Muziomone in the poem "The Isle of Lone," by Walter de la Mare.*
4. *Mole, visited by Rat at Mole End in "The Wind in the Willows," by Kenneth Grahame.*
5. *"Huckleberry Finn," in the novel of that title by Mark Twain.*
6. *Mr. Rochester, who owned Thornfield, in "Jane Eyre," by Charlotte Brontë.*
7. *Cluny, in the novel "Cluny Brown," by Margery Sharp.*
8. *Alice, in the White Rabbit's house in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," by Lewis Carroll.*

* * *

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 160

Across. 1, Slate pencil. 9, Altar. 10, Marked money. 11, Emmet. 12, Chink. 15, Fever. 17, Ace. 18, Plus. 19, Whoop. 21, Forum. 22, Latin. 23, Amber. 26, Rove. 27, Aim. 28, Grist. 30, Bandy. 33, Alder. 35, Expectation. 36, Lance. 37, Door knocker.

Down. 2, Leash. 3, Token. 4, Pads. 5, Noose. 6, Layer. 7, Stimulation. 8, British navy. 12, Comfortable. 13, Improvident. 14, Karma. 15, Few. 16, Ego. 20, Plumb. 24, Mar. 25, Rat. 28, Greed. 29, Spear. 31, Attic. 32, Drone. 34, Eton.

WAY TO THE HEART

And *never* too many cooks!

Dined on broth, this third day of my exercise of temperance in abstaining from flesh and was lightsome on it.
A little of a sudden transport of anger.

DR. RUTTY, *Quaker doctor in Dublin, in a journal,* 1755

Tarble Dote

Jane said casually, " You're late, Lily. Overtime, or what ? "

Late ? Late indeed ! The guilty Lily discovered a grievance in the word. She could have endured to be blamed if she had had a gay time, but after that unexciting hour with Mr. Baxter it was too much. And instinct drove her to choose hanging for a sheep rather than a lamb alone. " I've been dining," she said grandly. Jane glanced at her, suddenly maternal.

" Dining, have you ? Where ? "

" Frascatti's." It was a name she had seen recently in the papers, and was a good name, she thought.

" Frascatti's ? Where's that ? "

" Where's Frascatti's ? " Lily wondered where Frascati's was. " Well, it's difficult to say where a place is when you're driving in a car. It's in the Strand or somewhere."

. . . Jane did not know what to make of all this, and in her father's hearing did not wish to make too much of it.

" Well, did you have a nice dinner ? " she said . . .

" Ever so nice, thank you," said Lily. " You can't imagine . . ."

" What did you have ? " said Jane.

Lily wished that Jane would not be so particular . . . But now there was no help for it.

" We had *tarble dote*," she said.

" What's that ? "

" It's a kind of fish. Done up with trimmings and a yellow sauce."

" Well, I never heard of it. What did you have after that ? "

" Then we had a partridge. Roast. With chip potatoes."

" Lucky girl ! " said Jane. " Anything else ? "

" Well, I didn't want much else," said Lily. " I sat back and sipped my wine."

" Oh, did you ? . . . Well, you won't want any supper—that's one thing. Come on, Dad, supper's ready . . . Kettle, Lily ! "

Mr. Bell shambled out of his cabin. Lily obediently fetched the boiling kettle, filled the teapot, and sat down on the locker and watched them. She was very hungry, but after her expensive meal at Frascati's she could scarcely eat thick bread and butter and damson jam.

A. P. HERBERT, *The Water Gipsies*

This Above All

We may live without poetry, music, and art ;
We may live without conscience and live without heart ;
We may live without friends ; we may live without books ;
But civilized man cannot live without Cooks.

He may live without lore—what is knowledge but grieving ?
He may live without hope—what is hope but deceiving ?
He may live without love—what is passion but pining ?
But where is the man that can live without dining ?

LORD LYTTON, 1803–1873

Ecstasy

A small boy and an old dairyman are feeding the pigs. The mixing tub contains separated milk, upon which is floating barley meal, like a miniature seaside. They proceed to mix the contents, the dairyman using a thick pole, while the small boy is busy with a broom-handle. It is great fun. The sticks go quite slowly through the layer of meal, and then move with a sudden rush to the bottom of the tub, when they reach the liquid beneath . . .

The mixing finished, the movable board at the back of the sty is bolted in front of the trough, to keep the pigs back whilst the trough is filled with their food . . . The air is filled with noise. Noise incessant. Shrill pleading squeals, defiant squeals, grunts and snorts of impatience and exasperation, the banging and rattling of the offending barrier, the clank of the buckets, and the slow, smooth, soothing guggle of the meal being poured into the trough.

Suddenly in the midst of all this cacophony the board is pulled back, bolted into position behind the trough ; and then it is as though each pig suddenly shuts off steam, for a silence descends which can almost be felt.

Whilst the pigs feed, the dairyman and his assistant gaze lovingly at them. There is something very soothing about watching pigs feed. They are so very happy. Six or seven broad backs in line touching each other. Six or seven tails curling and uncurling in ecstasy, and the same number of mouths gobbling for dear life . . .

A. G. STREET, *Wheat and Chaff*

No Oysters

There is no R in the month of May,
There's none in the month of June,
And the days of the dog, July and Aug.,
Glide past on R-less shoon.
Then where are you going, my pretty maid,
And what will you find to eat
While the oyster broods in inedible moods
In his lonely bridal suite?

"I'm going a-feasting, sir," she said,
"I am on my way to dine.
Let the succulent bivalve cling to its bed,
Methinks I am doing fine . . .

"The baby lobster scarlet gleams
Next a mound of fresh asparagus;
While the blue point dreams connubial dreams,
I'll munch till my veins are varacus.
Lo, luscious now as an infant's lisp,
The strawberry, tart and juicy,
And soft-shell crabs as sweet and crisp
As a nocturne by Debussy.

"Though there is no R in the month of May,
And none in the month of June,
Nor the days of the dog, July and Aug.,
You can stuff till you're fit to swoon—
Who's that a-ringing the doorbell so,
Louder than doorbell ought to ring?
Why, it's half a dozen oysters, bowing low,
And their mouths are simply watering."

OGDEN NASH

The Happy Twelve

Philotas . . . used to tell my grandfather Lamprias that, having some acquaintance with one of the royal cooks, he was invited by him, being a young man, to come and see the sumptuous preparations for supper. So he was taken into the kitchen, where he admired the prodigious variety of all things; but particularly, seeing eight wild boars roasting whole, says he, "Surely you have a great number of guests." The cook laughed at his simplicity, and told him there were not above twelve to sup . . .

PLUTARCH, *Life of Antony*

THE PERFECT SERVANT

He was betrayed! Of that he had no doubt

by JOHN INGLIS HALL

THERE was nobody in Casablanca to touch la Belle Victoria for gaiety, naughtiness, physical attraction and brilliant efficiency as a servant. When you called at the studio where Sancia Delmas cut her stone to marvellous shapes, or like a god, created her men and women from common clay, la Belle Victoria was always there.

There was about her a delightful grossness, a triumphant sensuality. Her walk was an expression of the store of victory in her thighs. Yet she did not flaunt herself. She walked from the hips, wrapped in the folds of her white Arab dress, the swing of total freedom in her movement. When she led you into the studio, she glanced at you over her shoulder to make sure, if you were a man, that you were aware of her as a woman, then proceeded, enchanting and efficient, to surround you with the luxury of perfect attention, combined with absolute correctness. If, as Sancia's guest, you had touched her, she would have despised you : if you had not wanted to, she would have hated you. All this was implicit in her manner of receiving, on Sancia's behalf, responsibly and alone, you—a man.

Before she opened the door, she looked through the window to see who it was, then caught up her white dress so that its folds gave emphasis to her body. Then she went to his perch and collected Carlo, Sancia's white cockatoo, in order to come to the door with something to make love to on her shoulder. Thus, while she served you, she had a proxy, to court ironically, instead of you, to show that you had come to an uninhibited house where love was king.

This was la Belle Victoria the afternoon I arrived unexpectedly by air from Las Palmas. We skimmed in over the blue sea, above the white ruffle of surf opposite the *Hotel D'Anfa*. I watched our winged shadow on the broad, palm-fringed avenues with their great white villas and many coloured flowerbeds, and so to the aerodrome. Two circuits and a touch of the wheels and we were down.

Twenty five minutes later, I was at the studio door. Two ragged Arabs dozed with their backs to the wall of the little yard on to which it gives. I rang the bell.

La Belle Victoria saw me and came to answer it. She had a way

of opening the door which would have disturbed an anchorite. She backed away bowing, the white cockatoo fluttering precariously beside her black head. The forward bend of her shoulders loosened her dress in front, and at the same time she looked up at me, laughing, childishly delighted that I was there. I followed her in, not as one walking, but as though her intense physical attraction, receding, dragged me in out of the sun into the coolness of the room and the voluptuous peace of her administration, like a magnet drawing after it a little, lustful sliver of steel.

"Ah-h-h-h!" she cried, with her Arab sing-song. "Come in *Docteur*! Welcome back!"

She turned her head towards the parrot on her shoulder.

"A kiss for *Monsieur*," she cooed, kissing it on the beak while it pecked at her gently, muttering untranslatable things. "Sugar from the tongue of la Belle Victoria," she continued, and extended the pink tip of her tongue on which were the remains of a lump of sugar. The parrot ate from her, daintily, pausing every few seconds to give her little whispered ovations in Arabic.

"All the same, thou lovest me more than I love thee!" she exclaimed, took him back to his perch and looked at me, shaking her head from side to side, mock tragically.

"I love men passionately, sometimes for as long as a week," she said. "That cold one, he loves me the whole time, a little. We would be an unhappy *ménage*."

She laughed and went to the kitchen, returning a minute later with a tall stemmed glass of cold white wine on a burnished red copper tray. La Belle Victoria's unorthodox views about love were notorious.

I sat down on the sofa to enjoy my wine, to rest and to take stock of events in the studio. Everything, at first, seemed normal. Sancia's current work stood around on plinths and turntables. I remember there was a life-size head of General de Godoy, the famous Spahi leader, a man of sixty, incredibly vain, brave, handsome, generous, firm. All his qualities, good and bad, were in the model, acutely stated but never criticised, after Sancia's manner. In another corner there was a half-size nude of la Belle Victoria, kneeling. Sancia's extraordinary knowledge of anatomy gave her nudes a particular quality. I accorded this one a cri ical, diagnostic glance and found it superb. La Belle Victoria pointed at herself and said proudly:

"You see, *monsieur le Docteur*, there I am! To think that I am so beautiful!"

I did not consider whether she meant herself or the statue. It was in any case twice true, and I felt affectionate towards her for her intense pride in her brief moment of physical perfection, and was

moved that Sancia should have used her power to halt it for a little while in the stream of time. I smiled.

" Where is madame ? " I asked.

It was then that I thought I detected the first, faint shadow of uneasiness in la Belle Victoria.

" She is out," she said, after what seemed to me to be a moment's hesitation. " I do not know when she will be back."

That and nothing more. Usually, when I arrived, la Belle Victoria stormed me with news, true and untrue, told me everything she believed had happened since I had been away. This time, apparently, there had been nothing, as though Casablanca, which seethes with action, vice, intrigue and colour, had in twenty one days produced nothing—except the head of General de Godoy on a plinth, which I knew had been commissioned long before by his regiment, and the nude of Victoria ! I thought it was too little.

" Where has she gone ? " I asked, as Victoria wrapped the clay statues in their wet clothes.

" She did not tell me, *Docteur*," she answered ; and again I fancied that she was nervous, that she was being evasive.

There was something else too. La Belle Victoria was an extraordinarily independent creature. When a favourite guest of Sancia's came to the studio unexpectedly, and Sancia was not there to receive him, la Belle Victoria used immediately to arrange herself, without reference to Sancia, the first evening's entertainment. She chose the other guests from among the people she knew would fit in, and collected them by telephone with a mixture of charm, imperious coquetry and subtle, flattering courtesies. Everybody Sancia knew in Casablanca loved to be called up by la Belle Victoria for one of Victoria's " own " parties. She would permit of no refusal, other than a plea of an official dinner with somebody like the Resident General, but it was not advisable for a person to use even excuses like this more than once. This time no suggestion came. Such neglect had never been mine before.

I finished my wine and carried my bag up the wooden steps to the little gallery round the studio where the bedrooms and bathroom were. Perhaps I would find something changed in my room. I entered and stood sniffing the air, like a gun dog, but could find no physical signs to support the growing suspicion in my mind, even after I had walked right round the room, examining every piece of furniture and looking in every drawer. Then I opened the door of the room very quietly, so that la Belle Victoria, from the kitchen, would not know that I was going to Sancia's room. But as I turned the handle and the crack widened, I froze, for down below in the studio Victoria, on tiptoe, was carrying a small statue, wrapped in its damp cloth, towards the kitchen.

She did not notice me. I heard her kick the kitchen door shut on the other side with her foot, then, unexpectedly, there was a click. The key had been turned ! I passed to action, suddenly furious. So there was a statue of Sancia's which I was not to see ! Knowing my Sancia I felt certain that it was something to do with another man.

Slipping off my shoes for silence, I ran downstairs to the cigarette box on the studio table and emptied it, then to the small linenfold chest where Sancia kept her bulk stock of cigarettes. There were two boxes of a hundred and I took them, closed the chest quietly and carried them all up to my room and hid them. Five minutes later, in white slacks and shirt, a plaited camel-skin belt and sandals, I came down the wooden steps into the studio. I walked about ostentatiously, clicked the lid of the porcelain cigarette box and banged the wooden chest as I shut it. Victoria came in.

" No cigarettes," I said. " You must have been having a lot of parties since I have been away, Victoria."

" Parties ? " Victoria frowned. " But *Docteur*, I put two new boxes of a hundred in the chest a few days ago. Are you sure ? "

" I've just looked," I replied.

It was the first time that la Belle Victoria and I had ever been in anything other than the most complete accord. The critical eyes of the parrot, Carlo, presided beadily over our first disagreement. Suddenly he gave a little deprecating cough and made an incomprehensible but somehow bawdy parrot remark.

Victoria and I laughed. It broke the tension.

" Please go out and get me some cigarettes, Victoria," I ordered, handing her a thousand franc note which I had ready in my pocket.

" *Monsieur*, I can't," she replied. " Not now ! I have to wait for a telephone call which Madame Sancia is expecting. I have to take a message."

" I'll answer it," I said. " It won't matter who speaks, will it ? Unless its a private call that only you should know about, Victoria ? "

" Ah, *non* ! You are being unjust, *monsieur* ! "

Her calm suddenly left her. She snatched the money from me and flounced out of the studio door in a rage, veiling herself as she went.

I walked straight over to the kitchen, but only had time to fumble for a few minutes with my keys and a piece of wire at the locked door of the big wooden china cupboard, which contained the model Victoria had taken secretly out of the studio, before she returned, smiling ! I was barely able to get back into the room in time, and it was impossible to be sure that she had not seen what I had been doing.

" I have sent Achmet from the flower-stall for your cigarettes, *mònsieur*," she said demurely. " He will be back in a quarter of an hour."

The kitchen door swung open behind me, blown by the wind. We both saw at the same instant my piece of wire and my bunch of keys which I had left on the floor beside the china cupboard, not suspecting that she would be back so soon. Victoria looked at me reproachfully, and I blushed!

" *Monsieur le Docteur*," she said after a moment of silence, fixing me with her shrewd, laughing eyes. " I know what you think."

I was angry. I wanted to lash out at her because she had found me out.

" Well, what do I think, Victoria ? "

" You think I have hidden something from you."

" And you have ? "

She nodded. " Of course ! "

" What is it ? "

" It was Madame Sancia's orders that you were not on any account to see it," she said. " And *Monsieur le Docteur* is too jealous," she added shortly.

" And your friends, Victoria, are they never jealous ? " I asked.

She shook her head.

" No, *monsieur*," she said. " Never. They all know that if they became jealous I would get tired of them. I don't belong to anyone —except to Madame Sancia."

" And Madame Sancia—she is the same ? " I said, sensing the school in which she had been taught.

Victoria shrugged her shoulders and laughed. Sometimes when she laughed, it was as though all music and all malice were lodged in her throat.

" That is for *Monsieur le Docteur* to say," she said. " He surely knows the answer."

Then I saw that she was looking over my shoulder at the open window behind me and I realized that Sancia had returned. I could not tell how long she had been there and, for a moment, felt foolish.

" Jean, why are you standing there looking like a little boy who has been caught stealing the jam ? " asked Sancia in her deep, husky voice, leaning over the window-sill into the room as she spoke. The hot afternoon sun seemed to have brushed and burnished her fair hair. She was wearing a cornflower blue dress and her skin was the colour of honey.

Victoria went and opened the door for her. The moment she was over the threshold, I saw her eyes move quickly from statue to

statue—looking for something which she did not find. Then she turned to me and smiled.

" Good ! " she exclaimed. " Victoria managed to hide it, even though you did get back a few days too soon."

Then she came over and kissed me.

" It's a model of the person you love most in the world," she said. " Yourself—wearing your Arab trousers. I intended it for your birthday next week, but instead, we shall unveil it tomorrow—or perhaps late tonight."

I felt mildly ridiculous, not a little guilty, somewhat mean and rather petty. For Sancia had me by the body, by the mind, by the throat, by the soul, by the heart. Affectionate, brilliant, with the ruthlessness of the artist whose work springs from inward compulsion, she could do no wrong—except in my imagination, while I was away. I took her by the hand, my mind full of apologies which I would never make.

" Let's go out to dinner, Sancia," I suggested. " I want to show you off to people tonight."

" Yes, let's," she replied. " It so happens that I wouldn't mind showing you off to people, too. I'll go and have a bath and change."

She pressed my hand and left me. When she had gone upstairs, Victoria, who had returned to the kitchen while we were speaking, put first her head, then her hand and arm round the door.

" *Docteur* ! " she whispered, stretching out her hand to me. There was irony, amusement and wickedness in her eyes. " Your keys ! You remember ? "

I took them from her and put them in my pocket.

" Victoria," I said admiringly, " you are the perfect servant ! "

" I know," she said, nodding her head vigorously and smiling. " I am . . . perfect."

With this whispered tribute from herself to her own unique powers, she closed the kitchen door quietly behind her.

* * *

TRYING

Having recently taken up driving, a timid woman wanted everything to be just so. One day she complained to her husband, " That little mirror up there isn't set right."

" What's the matter with it ? " the husband asked.

" I can't see myself at all," she said. " All I see is some car behind."

THREE BOUNTIES OF BACCHUS

"Remember," he said, "they breed monsters, my son!"

by LANGSTON DAY

IN the days when Crustus was Emperor in Rome there lived a beggar named Pandojumnus whom the gods had endowed with such astonishing impudence and powers of persuasion that he actually came to be Emperor himself; and if the Romans make no mention of this fact in their records it must be because Domitilla, the formidable wife of Crustus, did all in her power to erase the event from human memory and written word.

The ancestry of Pandojumnus is still in doubt, for during his life no one knew where he came from and his own accounts of his origin were hopelessly inconsistent. Sometimes he said that his father was a banished Roman knight; at others that he was descended from Herod the Great by the loveliest of his ten wives; and once he proclaimed himself a great grandson of Vologeses, the Parthian king. However the truth may be, most people laughed at his tales and called him " Simus," or " Flat Nose", a nickname for clowns; and certainly the name suited him well, for he had an immense stomach, a great bulbous nose, and a voice so loud that when he stood among a score of beggars in Pompey's Portico he could shout down the whole pack of them.

Not only for his voice was Pandojumnus remarkable: he had a genius for cajolery which few men could resist. Money poured into his wallet so fast that soon after his arrival in Rome he left the ranks of the one hundred and fifty thousand beggars whom the annona fed at the State expense and rose into a special class of his own.

These were days when the rich men of Rome felt obliged to give money and presents to hosts of clients who acknowledged them as their patrons. You had to know the ropes to be a successful client: you must call on your patron at daybreak, when everyone rose as a matter of course, and obey the strict rules of etiquette, or you would come away empty-handed. Pandojumnus was quite equal to this. He joined the petitioning crowd of briefless barristers, professors without pupils and artists without orders, and soon found not one rich patron but half a dozen. Wearing the ceremonial toga he would present himself at their houses, and address each benefactor by his

correct title and with so noble an air of dignity-in-distress that it was impossible to resist him.

In a few years' time he became such a king among beggars that you might have taken him for an equestrian knight. You would see him lording it with the dandies at a barber's stall, having his long chestnut hair waved with curling irons, his beard trimmed and sprayed with perfume, and even his cheeks and forehead plastered with little cloth " beauty " patches to conceal the flaws in his skin. And if the barber were unlucky enough to tweak a single hair he would jump up with a roar and set about him with his fists like any young blood. You might catch sight of him at the baths of Caracalla, a huge, hairy figure, sweating royally in the *caldarium*, or shouting encouragements to the ball players in the *palaestrae*. He was everywhere to be seen, but best of all he loved the chariot races in the Circus Maximus, with its tiers of stone seats for two hundred and fifty thousand spectators and its marvellous racehorses whose breastplates were studded with plaques and amulets and whose manes were starred with pearls. On friendly terms with many of the star charioteers, he could bet every *sesterce* he possessed, and so successfully that scores of people followed his lead.

Pandojumnus was married to a girl named Sosia whose father was a pastry cook. She was rather a shrew, and they quarrelled like a couple of Egyptian cats. Yet they were devoted to one another, and this despite their very different characters. For whereas Pandojumnus took his good luck as a matter of course, Sosia could never accustom herself to the notion of living extravagantly nor play the part of a great lady. When he wished her to ride with him through the streets of Rome on mounts hired from a Numidian muleteer, or be borne with him in a carrying chair on the backs of Syrian porters, she felt awkward and uncomfortable. And if after some lucky stroke he spent all his winnings on a tremendous carousal at the *Two Brothers* inn, she would find fault with him for ordering Falernian wine instead of some cheaper brand.

" By Bacchus, you have no taste," he would bellow. " This immortal wine is wasted on a woman like you. I might as well pour it down the throat of a Tuscan hog ! "

At this Sosia would fire up and call him a mutton-headed stentor with the manners of a Catelaunian savage, and before you could say Mars they would be at each other's throats.

Sosia would have liked to buy a home with one of these windfalls of his, perhaps a nice little villa in Ostia, and whenever she had a child, which was rather often, she suggested doing this. Pandojumnus would never hear of such a thing, whereupon Sosia would sulk and threaten to abandon the infant.

But when it came to the point neither of them could bear to do away with their offspring; so Pandojumnus would take the child and leave it by night in the porch of some rich man's house on the Pincian or the Esquiline, together with a letter written on the finest parchment. This precious communication, which he would himself dictate to a notary, announced in the most grandiloquent words that the child was begotten by one of the gods who had chosen this Senator, or whoever he might be, as foster-father because of his unrivalled talents, manifold virtues and nobility of birth. Reading this, even the most miserly of men would hasten to adopt the child, for the Romans were both sophisticated and naïvely credulous.

One evening after winning a huge sum of money at the Circus, Pandojumnus feasted with his friends at the *Glory of Agrippa* inn and afterwards challenged all comers to a *commissatio*—a drinking bout in which the competitors had to drain a cup of wine at a single draught. With a stomach the size of a wine vat he was easily the winner, and feeling unusually pleased with himself he began to boast:

"Why should I squander my talents upon men? Henceforth I shall beg from the gods alone. Ho, you son of a water carrier—some more wine!"

"Hark at him," Sosia cried. "Which of the gods is to be honoured by your patronage, Simus, and what will you beg of him?"

"Naturally I shall address myself to Bacchus," said Pandojumnus, turning over on his dining-couch. "As to my demands, I shall ask him for three wishes so that I may state my requirements at leisure."

"From Anticyra, I should think," said his wife.

Pandojumnus flushed with anger, for in Anticyra was the well-known home for incurable lunatics.

"Be silent, you cross-eyed hippopotamus, or I shall have you driven into the Amphitheatre," he shouted.

"Cross-eyed did you call me?" screamed Sosia. "You dare to say that again, you sack of rotten turnips, you bag of wind with a bull's voice!"

"By the gods, you shall not speak to me like this," roared her husband, jumping up and making a rush at her.

Sosia threw her drinking cup at him and got behind the landlord, an immense retired gladiator with the scars of several ancient wounds on his face and arms. He threw Pandojumnus down, using a trick he had learned many years ago, and in a short time their tempers cooled.

But the quarrel impressed the boast on the memory of Pandojumnus, and next morning he offered up a prayer to Bacchus:

"O Bacchus, noblest and most generous of the deities! Deign to

lend ear to thy most faithful devotee, Pandojumnus, who from his earliest youth hath spent the greater part of his income in thine honour. Vouchsafe, O Bacchus, to grant him three wishes so that his unfailing devotion may be suitably rewarded."

Every morning for many weeks he went to the shrine of Bacchus and uttered this prayer in a great roaring voice which could be heard half a league away. Now the gods have many matters of importance to attend to, so that only the most persistent petitioners gain a hearing. But Pandojumnus continued praying for so long that at last Bacchus began to take notice of him.

"This fellow is an impudent rogue," he muttered to himself, " but he has a merry tongue in his head and he drinks wine as the Fucine Lake drinks water. I have a mind to visit him."

So one May day when Pandojumnus and Sosia were on a lonely part of the Nomentan Way which ran by flowery fields, there came a loud thunder-clap, and Bacchus appeared. He was a huge, red faced figure crowned with vine leaves, and the traces of his chariot were drawn by an unearthly company of satyrs, nymphs and fauns. Some of them clashed cymbals, others danced and played wild music on the syrinx.

" Ho, rascal," roared Bacchus, " what mean you by these importunate prayers ? "

There was no answer, for Pandojumnus lay face downwards in terror, and Sosia had taken to her heels.

" Get up, chicken heart, and let us have a look at you," the god commanded.

Pandojumnus scrambled to his feet and stood trembling, while the nymphs, fauns and satyrs crowded round him, jeering at his cowardice.

" H'm," said Bacchus. " Now tell me why I should grant you these three wishes. Give me a good reason for each."

By this time Pandojumnus had begun to recover his wits. " Firstly," he replied, " I addressed my prayer to thee, O most noble Bacchus, and not to another of the gods, which proves my excellent power of discrimination."

" Good. Your first wish shall be granted."

" Secondly, I abhor work and love pleasure, which testifies to the nobility of my nature."

" Very good," Bacchus agreed with a guffaw. " I will allow you a second wish."

" Thirdly, I drink wine, whereas Crustus drinks only water, which shows that I have more wisdom than the Emperor himself, whom many of the Senate declare to be omniscient."

Bacchus laughed loudly. " Your third wish is won, rascal. I wish you joy of it."

With that he prepared to depart, but immediately Pandojumnus prostrated himself again and cried, "Most gracious and illustrious Lord, to save Your Omnipotence waste of his valuable time may I voice my first wish immediately?"

"Well, what is it?"

"Grant that I may become Emperor so that thy rites may be fittingly observed in Rome and her dominions."

At these words the attendants of the gods were so convulsed with mirth that the surrounding hills and caves echoed with their laughter. The nymphs went into uncontrollable fits of merriment and the fauns and satyrs rolled about on the grass holding their sides.

"By the golden grapes of Gombeluna," laughed Bacchus, "it will be worth a temple of porphyry to see you as the *Princeps*. Go to the Palatine Hill, ruffian, and demand the Imperial Diadem. I will attend to the rest."

As he got into his chariot his expression changed. "Only the gods are free to choose," he said, "but you are like the Cretan maiden imprisoned in the maze who chose the bull. The bounties of Bacchus breed monsters."

He shouted to his attendants, who seized the traces of his chariot and ran at full speed down the meadow, until with a second clap of thunder the entire company disappeared.

Dazed by this unearthly visitation, Pandojumnus lay on the grass and rubbed his head which was filled with dazzling visions of imperial splendour. Presently Sosia crept from the cave in which she had been hiding and came timidly towards him.

"Oh Simus, I never thought to see you alive."

"Pah! You have no more sense than a supper-praiser. What is the matter with you, taking to your heels when a god comes to pay us a friendly visit?"

"W-What did he say to you?"

"What did he say? Why, that I am to be Emperor in Rome and rule with becoming pomp and splendour."

"*You*—to be Emperor?"

"Certainly. He bade me go to the Palatine Hill and demand the Imperial Diadem at once."

"What is the matter with you?", he cried angrily when Sosia merely gaped. "Do you think I could not fill the rôle?"

His wife shook her head in utter stupefaction.

"Foh, I shall find no difficulty at all," he boasted, striding up and down with great dignity. "I, Pandojumnus, Gallicus, Asiaticus, Germanicus, Britannicus, High Pontiff, Father of the Country, Protector of the People, and Much Else that I have Forgotten—I hereby decree that all the dirty water-swilling rascals in my Imperial

Domains shall forthwith be arrested and kicked over the Tarpeian Cliff. Ho, slave, bring me the Sword of Alexander. So. Now draw it forth from the scabbard and hand it to me. Not by the point, thou fool! Thus. Now instruct these bald-headed vagabonds to kneel before me. So. Arise, Grakalax, Prefect of the Imperial Frogponds! Arise, Pumperdinko, Chief of the Praetorian Dung-heaps!"

"May the gods preserve him, he is demented," Sosia exclaimed.

Pandojumnus laughed loudly. "We shall see who is mad, my little squirrel, when I send for you to come to the Palace of the Caesars."

Later that same day he set out for the Palatine Hill, sitting in a carrying chair, but before he had gone very far he stopped at a tavern where he drank a great deal of wine and held forth to all who would listen to him upon the miraculous appearance of Bacchus. Many laughed at his tale, but others heard him gravely; for there was nothing strange in the notion that the gods should interest themselves in human affairs, and as to Emperors, they appeared and disappeared as suddenly as Italian thunderstorms. So when he set out on the last lap towards the Palace a large crowd came with him to see what would happen.

The sentry on duty at the Palace looked suspiciously at the crowd and curtly bade him be off; but Pandojumnus roared out that he wished for an audience with the Emperor and his great voice reached the ears of Lepidus, the Commander of the Praetorian Guard, who came out to see what was happening. He was in a restless mood that afternoon because a plot was afoot to murder Crustus and he was one of the chief conspirators.

The Praetorian Guard were heartily tired of the mean and apoplectic Emperor, who was said to be the most niggardly ruler since Galba. He had never distributed a bonus among them or allowed them to pillage a single shop. The combats he provided in the Colosseum were a standing joke, for the sick bulls and the mangy lions had clearly been bought on the cheap, and the fat, puffy veterans who fought them were hardly fit for an audience of Syrian Greeks.

The soldiers had a verse about him which they sang to their marching tune, '*The Three Griefs of Augustus*'. It ran:

'Ho, my lads, the noble Crustus
Gives us each a gift to share,
Half a cup of Tiber water
Half a breath of Roman air.'

They hated him as much as they hated his dragon of a wife,

Domitilla. The Senate disliked him, too, for under his wife's influence he was for ever prating about Rome's decadence and the beauties of the Augustan Age. Men were punished for the smallest breach of good behaviour. Actors had been flogged for cracking jokes in the Theatre of Marcellus, his speeches from the Oration Platform were sermons against looseness of morals, and a waggish story went the round that two Senators had been imprisoned for belching in the Curia.

Rome found him a wearisome bore, and as if to show that his end was near, many strange signs and portents had recently appeared. The doors of the Temple of Jupiter had suddenly flown open to the sound of Titanic laughter; the Emperor's old war-horse had shed bitter tears; and a fiery portent in the shape of a huge red nose had been seen hanging in the sky above the Capitoline Hill.

The College of Augurs had not yet decided what all these things portended, but Crustus doubled his bodyguard of Germans and the conspirators met each night to work out details of their plot. The main difficulty was to agree upon the next Emperor. Some of the plotters favoured a General named Balbo who commanded the Legions on the German frontier. Others preferred Lepidus, while others again considered that it would be wiser not to risk another Emperor at all.

The wonderful tale which Lepidus now heard from Pandojumnus gave him an idea. Why not confront Crustus with this preposterous fellow? The story would fly round Rome and perhaps would weaken the Emperor's position. He gave orders for Pandojumnus to be shown in.

The Emperor, sitting in his private Law Court with four gigantic Germans standing behind him, was about to try some Senators who were charged with composing a scurrilous lampoon against him, when suddenly he saw Pandojumnus.

"Who is this?" he asked testily.

"My Lord," Pandojumnus replied, "I am the bearer of a special message from the god, Bacchus."

Crustus stared at him. "A message from Bacchus? What message?"

"My Lord, you are to hand over the Imperial Diadem to me at once."

This was too much for the Senators. A titter ran round the Court, and at the sound of it the Emperor exploded.

"Treason!" he shouted, making sure that this was the first move in a plot. "Arrest him!"

The German Guard seized Pandojumnus and looked at Crustus

as if expecting him to give the order for his immediate execution. But the Emperor had leapt up from his curule chair and was dancing up and down shaking his fist in the faces of the Senators, working himself up into such a storm of rage that he turned purple in the face—and suddenly he fell to the floor in an apoplectic fit. Before his slaves could carry him to his bedchamber he was dead.

The news flew round Rome and at once the city was thrown into confusion. The conspirators met hastily and had another violent dispute about who should be Emperor; the Praetorian Guard assembled on Mars Field and argued the same question, the Senate went into perpetual session until the crisis should pass, and the crowd outside the Palace blocked all the approaches to the Palatine Hill.

Now that Crustus was dead, the German bodyguard were nonplussed as to what should be done with Pandojumnus, and to escape from their dilemma they decided to put him to death. Lysides, the Greek Minister of Finance, saved his life by telling them the story of Bacchus's visit, which had already come to his ears. He thought he saw a chance of using Pandojumnus in an intrigue of his own.

The bodyguard were slow to relinquish their idea of summary execution, but at length they released the prisoner and hailed him as the new Emperor. When Lepidus hurried on to the scene with his fellow conspirators he found Pandojumnus with his German bodyguard standing staunchly behind him addressing an immense crowd from the Oration Platform.

What was to be done now? Lepidus offered to lure Pandojumnus into the Guards' camp under pretence of persuading the soldiers to swear loyalty to him and then have him assassinated. But although Pandojumnus came to the camp readily enough, the second part of the plot miscarried; for the soldiers had already heard about Bacchus and when a great roaring voice promised to pay every one of them twenty gold pieces, such a shout went up that there was no longer any question of their loyalty.

The Senate meanwhile had been holding a most uncomfortable session, making speeches which veered this way and that according to the conflicting rumours which reached them. These were times when a morbid passion for the unusual and the extraordinary made common sense seem a defect. It quickly became evident that the greater part of Rome was behind Pandojumnus, sensing which the Senate hastened to vote in his favour and even offered to deify him immediately. The conspirators had to make the best of the situation. Crustus was out of the way and Domitilla had fled. A mere beggar, they thought, could be pushed aside as soon as he had made himself sufficiently ridiculous.

Pandojumnus, however, was not such a fool as they thought him. He at once paid the soldiers their twenty gold pieces, but apart from this he did very little except to take note of the councillors and the men who had influence in the Senate. He soon realized that he would not be safe until he had removed a great many of them; and so when the palace had been refurnished and decorated to his taste, he held a great banquet to which he invited all the men he considered dangerous.

Never had there been such a feast in living memory. There were *hors-d'œuvres* of dormice rolled in honey and spiced peahen's eggs, lobsters garnished with asparagus, titlark tongue pasties, antelope fawns in aspic, ostrich egg omelettes, Corsican mullets and lampreys from the Straits of Sicily, goose's liver and boiled capons, a boar roasted whole, truffles and mushrooms, boiled calves, Matian apples and baskets of delicious African figs.

After the meal, wines blent with resin and pine-pitch, honey wines, and the immortal Falernian were unsealed by the gallon and poured through a funnel strainer into a great mixing bowl from which the guests' drinking cups were filled.

Unhappy guests! Crustus, in his reforming zeal, had issued an edit threatening banishment to any man in a public position who was found intoxicated. His spies and informers were everywhere, so that for many years hardly any man of importance had dared drink to excess. But now the guests under the watchful eye of their new Emperor were obliged to drain great goblets of wine in the rites of *commissatio*. Many of them choked to death, and all the rest of them became very drunk indeed.

On the next morning they awoke to find themselves in prison, and later in the day they were charged with grossly insulting the Emperor and uttering treasonable threats against him. Pandojumnus tried them himself in his private court, and since they were quite unable to remember what had occurred on the night before, they were all found guilty and banished to the island of Planasia. Their lands and possessions were confiscated and handed over to some of the men whom Crustus had banished and whom Pandojumnus now recalled.

He dismissed the elderly slaves who attended Crustus at the Palace and replaced them by younger slaves of his own choice. The most expert cooks in the Roman empire were engaged for the palace kitchens and the finest musicians from Greece were invited to Rome as choristers and flute players. He also gave his patronage to actors, puppet players, jugglers, buffoons, chatter-boxes, conjurers, dwarfs, giants, freaks, snake charmers, astrologers, acrobats and contortionists while Stoic philosophers, rhetoricians and grammarians were told to change their professions or leave Roman territory for life.

In days when even the *Princeps* rubbed shoulders with the *plebs* Pandojumnus understood very well how to play his part. He loved to walk through the narrow streets of the city where from dawn the rattle of the night carts and the swearing of drovers gave way to a breathless jostle of pedestrian and a multi-voiced din which made a late sleep impossible. Followed by a retinue of slaves who distributed alms, he exchanged compliments with the barbers who shaved their customers in the middle of the roadway, winked at the poor little schoolboys who under awnings outside the shops sat learning their 'Twelve Tables', nodded genially to the money-changers and beaters of gold whose mallets striking stone swelled the pandemonium of the tinkers' hammers and the raucous voices of the cook-shop owners barking the merits of their hot sausages. The only men he ignored were the beggars who whiningly invoked the name of Bellona.

As for life at the Palace, it became more riotous every month. There were carnivals, theatricals, drinking bouts, carousals and gala nights. Each morning Pandojumnus would appear at an upper window and shower down gold coins upon the crowd below. The soldiers made up another verse to their marching song which ran :

'Filled himself with puddle water
Crustus did, and died of fits.
Pandojumnus shouted Bacchus !
Now it's raining golden bits.'

Pandojumnus made a point of refusing no one an audience, and one day a man who gave his name as Opoponax was shown into the audience chamber. He was a venerable figure with a bald head and a snow white beard. In his left hand he carried a scroll, under his arm a lyre.

"Hail, Imperator !" he cried, making an obeisance. "I come to offer my humble services as a private philosopher. I need hardly add that my views are not those of the Stoics."

"Well ?" said Pandojumnus suspiciously.

"All the noblest and the best of the Roman Emperors have employed a private philosopher to advise them. I, my Lord, am at present disengaged for I have just completed my monograph on the *Manners and Morals of Centaurs*. My learning is immense : I have already forgotten more than Aristotle ever knew. My philosophy is both genial and profound : I am never at a loss in the most difficult situation. I have the gift of poesy and usually tender my philosophical advice in rhymed metre. I am also an accomplished lyrist and set my maxims to music."

"H'm," said Pandojumnus. "What philosophical advice do you tender me at this present moment ?"

Opoponax gazed upwards as if conferring with his muse; then striking his lyre he sang in a a quavering voice:

'The wisest and the best of men may err
Save with the aid of a sound philosopher.'

"What did Bacchus mean when he said that his bounties breed monsters?"

'Your fate, great Pandojumnus, lies above
The world—to rule the Earth and Heavens with Jove.'

"I will give you a month's trial," said Pandojumnus.

Crustus had been so niggardly that he had hoarded more than twenty million gold pieces. With this and the revenues from Egypt and from the confiscation of estates, Pandojumnus had plenty of money in his Treasury. Helped by Lysides he was quick to invent new sources of income. Whenever one imperial colony attacked another he fined the aggressors, and since they did little else but attack each other the plan worked well. He also fined authors for reading their works aloud in public and astrologers and soothsayers for making false predictions, which brought in a surprising amount of money.

With ample funds he was able to provide the best entertainments that had been seen since the days of Titus. It was a brave sight, the parade of the gladiators on the morning of a public holiday—the Samnites with their shining swords and shields, the Thracians with their daggers and round bucklers, the *murmillones* wearing helmets crowned with fishes, and the net-men carrying their nets and tridents. Many of them drove to the Colosseum in smart carriages, and alighting in front of the amphitheatre marched round the arena dressed in purple robes embroidered with gold, before saluting Pandojumnus in his imperial box. Their valets followed carrying their arms, and when the fighting began, a band of flutes, horns and trumpets struck up a fearful cacophony which was sometimes swelled by the notes of a hydraulic organ.

Pandojumnus loved the grandeur of his position, but Sosia reclining beside him was self-conscious and irritable. From an early hour she had been forced to submit herself to her tire-women who built up her hair in elaborate tiers and storeys. They painted her brow and arms with chalk and white lead, reddened her cheeks and lips with ochre and blackened her eyebrows with antimony. Other attendants fixed a diadem on her hair, ear-rings in her ears, golden trinkets round her neck, a pendant on her breast, bracelets on her wrists, rings on her fingers and silver circlets on her ankles, until she was scarcely able to move.

If only she had the assurance of her husband! The crowd cheered him wherever he went, and he found so many ingenious ways of pleasing the *plebs* that there was hardly a murmur against him.

He made a point of remedying grievances. Many houses in Rome were so jerry-built that they fell down, burying the unfortunate tenants. Pandojumnus had a law passed compelling any contractor who had built a house which showed signs of collapsing to go and live in it himself. He also did something for the unhappy school-children of Rome who were drilled in parrot-like repetitions and beaten savagely for the slightest fault. By a new edict they were allowed once a month to teach their schoolmasters and chastise them; and naturally the cruellest teachers were given the worst time. Pandojumnus was fond of children and would often amuse himself with them at a game of taws, or knucklebones. Opoponax composed a fulsome elegy which began:

'The gods step down to Earth from off their thrones
So Pandojumnus plays at knucklebones.'

The soldiers laughed at him but loved him, the plutocrats liked him because he put no ban on ostentatious living, the Senate was largely on his side, and the aristocracy of Rome had become so adulterated that having been a beggar scarcely counted against him at all. But for an unexpected event it is probable that he would have been deified and joined the company of the immortals. The cause of it was Domitilla.

An old fashioned type of Roman matron was Domitilla, tough, heroic, and no more squeamish of poisoning an enemy than of killing a rat. In her younger days when Crustus had fought against the Germans she had accompanied him in the field, and once when he was sick she had even taken command of the Legions. The soldiers called her "Hatchet Face" and made up a verse about her which is too coarse to repeat.

She was living in retirement now, but one day Pandojumnus, who was enormously proud of his palace and who had a sneaking regard for the aristocracy, sent her a courteous letter asking her to pay him a visit. Curiosity prompted her to accept, and in a few weeks' time she arrived, sitting haughtily in a litter panelled with transparent stone. Behind her followed several litters with her baggage and her personal attendants who were no less ugly than herself.

Pandojumnus and Sosia did their best to entertain her but they found her a difficult guest. She looked with scorn at the beautiful furniture and decorations: the great dining rooms with

carved ivory ceilings which revolved during a banquet, scattering flowers and perfumes on the guests; the floors, tables and couches of gold and mother-of-pearl; the red-streaked walls of Cappadocian stone; the baths flowing with water from the sulphur spring of Tibur; the marvellous paintings and the colossal bronze statue of Pandojumnus in the vestibule which had taken twenty four elephants to move into position—all these she regarded as mere vulgar display. And when she spoke she held her aristocratic nose high as if unwilling to breathe the same air as a couple of beggars.

Pandojumnus was not easily abashed even by such a visitor as this. At a great banquet held in her honour he cracked jests which set the rest of the company in a roar, and he related the most improbable tales of the kings and princes he pretended to have met. Domitilla's frown grew darker. A stickler for etiquette, she was annoyed that she could not put him out of countenance.

After the banquet there was music, an exhibition of juggling, a performance of clowns and dwarfs, and finally the chief event of the evening, a dramatic presentation of the notable occasion when Bacchus had appeared to the Emperor.

When it came to this last item, Domitilla remarked acidly that she had no liking for fables and retired to bed.

Pandojumnus reddened with rage. "What does the old ape mean by that?" he growled when she had gone. "Does she mean that I am a liar?"

"The answer depends upon whether she implies that you have spoken a falsehood," said Opoponax, waving his hand oratorically, "or to put the matter somewhat differently, whether you have uttered words which are not true. If we predicate . . ."

"She hates us because we are beggars," said Sosia.

"Beggars? Who are beggars?" cried Pandojumnus. "Have we treated her as if we were beggars? Thundering Jove, I would rather dine with an Egyptian crocodile."

Some of his guests broke into loud guffaws.

"What is the whole duty of a man towards his fellow creature?" asked Opoponax solemnly. "I have already discoursed upon this question in general terms, but what if the creature be a crocodile?"

Pandojumnus was too angry to be interested in his duty towards a crocodile. "She thinks to make a fool of me, does she, the wrinkled old wart-hog! May the gods give her imperishable whiskers. I have a good mind to make her fight in the arena with a British savage!"

He fumed and swore, but at last he was persuaded to see a performing bear dressed up as Crustus which growled so comically when its attendant pretended to belch that his temper was restored;

and by the next morning he was ready to make another effort to be polite to his guest.

But Domitilla did not appear. It was reported that she was unwell. All day long she remained in her apartments, and in the evening an extraordinary rumour flew abroad. It was said that in the night she had grown a luxuriant pair of whiskers which could not be removed by cutting or plucking.

When Sosia heard of this she cried, " See what comes of your jabber, you chattering magpie! Bacchus warned you that his bounties would breed monsters."

Pandojumnus stared at her. " I ! A chattering magpie ? "

" Have you forgotten that you prayed the gods to make imperishable whiskers grow on her ? Your wish has been granted, and I hope you are satisfied."

The Emperor slapped his thigh and burst into a roar of laughter, but Sosia, who was feeling out of sorts, exclaimed angrily, " You cod's head, mischief will come of this."

She was perfectly right. Domitilla had never for one moment believed the story about Bacchus ; she was convinced that Pandojumnus had killed her husband and seized the Diadem by sorcery. And now, what stronger proof could a woman expect than the appearance of imperishable whiskers ? She was enraged but not intimidated. That night she left the palace secretly, and after a few weeks of forced marches she was borne into Balbo's camp on the German frontier.

Imagine the General's astonishment at the sudden appearance of old Hatchet Face with a frown as black as thunder and whiskers reaching halfway down to her knees ! It would have needed a stronger man than Balbo to refuse to fall in with her plans, which were to march on Rome and make himself Emperor.

His soldiers had been too far from Rome to know anything about Pandojumnus except that he was an upstart, so when Balbo paraded them in a local amphitheatre and promised them each one hundred gold pieces on the day they entered the Capital they were quite ready to follow him. All of them were heartily tired of fighting the German barbarians who possessed nothing worth looting, and who rose up again every time they were crushed.

Soon Pandojumnus heard from his spies that a large force led by Balbo and Domitilla was marching on Rome. Some of the legions in Gaul had joined them and the rebel army was said to number more than one hundred thousand men.

Pandojumnus was appalled, but Rome took the news calmly and when he made a short speech from the Oration Platform calling for

their loyalty he was loudly cheered. His courage began to return. The Senate met and passed a vote of confidence in him. The household astrologers cast the horoscopes of Balbo and Domitilla and found that they had been born under most unlucky signs. The College of Augurs examined the entrails of two dozen pullets and discovered that the omens were unusually propitious. An owl was reported to have perched on the roof of the Temple of Minerva and hooted three times the name "Balbo!" which was taken as a sign that the General's end was near.

On Mars Field the Praetorian Guard paraded. Pandojumnus, wearing a military helmet and a General's cloak, mounted a war-horse specially chosen for its docility and addressed them as follows:

"Soldiers, we have suffered too long in silence the vile insults which have been showered upon us by the ignoble scum which disgraces the name of Rome, but now the hour is at hand when we shall join battle with the white-livered water-swillers who follow that whiskered old crocodile, Domitilla. I exhort you to follow the Eagles to a new series of Roman victories. I call upon each man of you to defend his hearth and home from the unspeakable villainy of these tyrants who seek to tread you in the dust! The auguries are propitious, the gods testify to the nobility of our cause. Forward then to victory, and remember that when the battle is won there will be gold enough for each one of you to get drunk for a week."

At these noble words the soldiers cheered so loudly that his horse reared up and the Emperor nearly fell off. He was gratified with his success as a military orator and addressed the soldiers again on the following day. To Sosia he boasted that it was not half so hard to be a General as a beggar.

Perhaps his boast was repeated, for suddenly an alarming thing occurred. Whether the suggestion came from the soldiers by way of a joke, or whether from some ironical member of the Senate, it is hard to say, but it was rumoured that the Emperor would lead his forces into battle in person and at once the city took up the idea with enthusiasm.

Now when it came to fighting, Pandojumnus was as great a coward as you could find in the length and breadth of Italy, and on hearing what was expected of him he was terrified. When he told Sosia about it she laughed mockingly.

"You are afraid, Simus! You have no more courage than a Greek bath attendant."

"What is the use of expecting sense from a woman?" he growled. "These massacres are for the Legions. If a few thousand soldiers are killed, who is the worse for it? But if I, Pandojumnus, went down to the Shades—that would be a disaster for Rome, for I am unique."

" Unique in cowardice, you pop-eyed Hercules," jeered Sosia whose own fears had turned to bad temper.

" By the gods you shall not speak to me like this ! " he roared, jumping up and making a rush at her.

Sosia threw a pocket sun-dial at him and darted behind a statue. The gigantic German bodyguard stood motionless behind their Emperor. They expected him to seize Sosia by the hair and beat her to death as any Chief would have done in their own country, but he only shouted terrible threats at her and returned to his couch. The Germans did not move a muscle. The ways of the demi-gods were strange, but it was not for them to question their behaviour.

Pandojumnus spent a sleepless night trying to think of some way to avoid taking the field, and next day he kicked Opoponax across the vestibule for discoursing upon the glories of death in battle. Finally he gave it up and decided to brave it out and he announced the fact in another terrific speech from the Oration Platform. Rome was delighted. The Senate offered to vote him a military triumph in advance, and the soldiers sang another verse which ran :

' Hatchet Face she supped with Simus
On the breeze her whiskers float
Now she rides on Balbo's charger
Soon she'll sit in Charon's boat.'

But in the meantime Balbo and Domitilla had been moving south by forced marches. When they had advanced to within a few leagues of the City, Pandojumnus, mounted on a more spirited steed, with the Guard and a rabble of auxiliary troops behind him, marched out to meet them. The two armies halted a short distance apart, and after the usual preliminaries of trumpet blowing and last-minute exhortations to the soldiers, an advance guard of the enemy's bowmen let fly.

An arrow from one of the first flights grazed the Emperor's horse. The animal reared up and bolted with him along the Flaminian Way all the way back to Rome. Inside the city walls it threw him, and scared out of his wits Pandojumnus stumbled back to the palace. Seeing their Emperor approach, rumours of disaster spread quickly round, and by the palace gates thousands gathered clamouring for news.

Pandojumnus, of course, knew nothing of the battle's outcome but he was not left long in ignorance. The Praetorian Guard and the auxiliaries were no match for Balbo's seasoned veterans, and after losing some hundreds in a heavy slogging match they broke and fled. A detachment of cavalry passsed round their flank and

galloped into Rome. From the palace windows Pandojumnus and Sosia saw them coming.

Quaking with fear, Pandojumnus cursed the day when he had prayed to Bacchus, cursed the vanity which had made him ask for the Diadem, cursed the hour of weakness in which he had consented to take the field.

Balbo's cavalry came up the hill in a cloud of dust, scattering the crowd like leaves in a wind. Pandojumnus bawled to his slaves to barricade the doors, but no one came. His German bodyguard he had left behind him on the battlefield, his slaves had fled.

" Oh, if we had wings to escape from this accursed bird-cage," he cried out; and he began roaring to all the gods in the Pantheon to save him and Sosia from a violent death.

Almost at once he had a most peculiar sensation. His great belly began to shrink, his neck grew thin, his lips hard and pointed, and his military cloak curiously soft and fluffy.

He tried to call out again, but the strangest sound came from his throat. The walls and windows were growing enormous. He looked at Sosia and saw that an extraordinary change was taking place in her too.

Like himself she was changing into a bird!

Now some of Balbo's cavalrymen had dismounted and were battering on the doors of the palace. Their voices rose in threatening shouts. The Emperor of the Romans and the Lady Sosia hopped out on to the windowsill and flew away to the woods.

And in the woods you may still find their descendants. Like Sosia and Pandojumnus they are wanderers, building no nest but persuading others to act as foster-parents to their unwanted children. Like Sosia and Pandojumnus they cry " Bacch-us ! " hoping against hope for one more bounty so that they may recover their human form.

After the lapse of centuries, " Bacch-us" has become " Cuck-oo." But it makes no difference at all, for the god never deigns to hear.

* * *

SHARP PRACTICE

Two bachelors, sharing a flat in town, were discussing that perennial man's problem: how to dispose of used razor blades.

" I," said the one, " find they keep accumulating in the most extraordinary way, and I have found no other course than to bury them in packets at the bottom of the garden. What do you do ? "

" I ? " said the other—" I just put them in your room."

PACK CLOUDS AWAY

Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it

CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER, 1829–1900

How green the leaves were springing ! how glad the birds were singing !
When I rested in the meadow with my head on Patrick's knees !
And, oh ! 'twas spring time !
Sweet, sweet spring time !
With the daisies all dancing before me in the breeze.

ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES, 1846-1931

London Soup

The climate of London, and indeed of England generally, is due to the influence of the Gulf Stream. The way it works is this. The Gulf Stream, as it nears the shores of the British Isles and feels the propinquity of Ireland, rises into the air, turns into soup, and comes down on London.

At times the soup is thin and is, in fact, little more than a mist ; at other times it has the consistency of a thick Potage St. Germain. London people are a little sensitive on the point and flatter their atmosphere by calling it a fog. But it is not. It is soup.

The notion that no sunlight ever gets through, and that in the London winter people never see the sun, is, of course, a ridiculous error, circulated no doubt by the jealousy of foreign nations. I have myself seen the sun plainly visible in London, without the aid of glasses, on a November day in broad daylight ; and again one night about four o'clock in the afternoon I saw the sun distinctly appear through the clouds. The whole subject of daylight in the London winter is, however, one which belongs rather to the technique of astronomy than to a book of description. In practice daylight is but little used. Electric lights are burned all the time in all houses, buildings, railway stations and clubs. This practice, which is now universally observed, is called Daylight Saving.

But the distinction between day and night during the London winter is still quite obvious to anyone of an observant mind. It is indicated by various signs, such as the striking of clocks, the tolling of bells, the closing of saloons, and the raising of taxi rates.

It is much less easy to distinguish the technical approach of night in the other cities of England that lie outside the confines

physical and intellectual, of London and live in a continuous gloom.

In such places as the great manufacturing cities, Buggingham-under-Smoke or Gloomsbury-on-Ooze, night may be said to be perpetual.

STEPHEN LEACOCK, 1869-1944, *My Discovery of England*

Wind-cheater

Nor frost, nor snow, nor wind I trow,
Can hurt me if it wold,
I am so wrapped within and lapped
With jolly good ale and old.

Author Unknown

The Lark's Song

The air was wine, the moist earth-smell wine, the lark's song, the wafts from the cowshed at the top of the field, the pant and smoke of a distant train—all were wine—or song, was it ? or odour, this unity they all blent into ? I had no words then to describe it, that earth-effluence of which I was so conscious ; nor, indeed, have I found words since. I ran sideways, shouting ; I dug glad heels into the squelching soil ; I splashed diamond showers from puddles with a stick ; I hurled clods skywards at random, and presently I somehow found myself singing.

KENNETH GRAHAME, 1859-1932, *The Golden Age*

Short and Sweet

The English winter—ending in July
To recommence in August.

LORD BYRON, 1788-1824

Unrivalled Garrison

Weathercock with head where tail ought to be ; dark, damp, rotton, cutthroat-looking weather ; flowers blowing ; bluebottles buzzing ; doctors galloping in every direction ; a Philharmonic of blackbirds and thrushes ; an armistice from guns and shooting ; the poor punters driven to oyster dredging, eel picking, day labour, or beggary ; not even the pop-off of a Milford snob to be heard in that unrivalled garrison of tit shooters.

LT.-COL. PETER HAWKER, 1786-1853, *Diaries*

April Heat Wave

This Asiatic weather has certainly affected our cold constitutions. The Duchess of B— is afraid of being shot wherever she goes. A man has followed Miss Clavering *on foot* from the East Indies; is quite mad; and scenes are daily expected even in the drawing room. Another man has sworn to shoot a Miss Something, *n'importe*, if she did not run away with him from the Opera.

Sir Joshua Reynolds has a niece who is troubled with one of these passionate admirers, to whom she has refused her hand and her door. He came a few days since to Sir Joshua's; asked if she was at home; and, on being answered in the negative, he desired the footman to tell her to take care, for he was determined to ravish her, (pardon the word,) whenever he met her.

COUNTESS OF UPPER OSSORY,
in a letter to George Selwyn, April, 1779

Green and . . .

England, with all thy faults, I love thee still—
My country; and, while yet a nook is left
Where English minds and manners may be found,
Shall be constrained to love thee. Though thy clime
Be fickle, and thy year most part deformed
With dripping rains, or withered by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies,
And fields without a flower, for warmer France
With all her vines; nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bowers.

WILLIAM COWPER, 1731-1800

. . . Pleasant Land

How can I help loving England? England with the quiet lawns and the great trees in which the rooks are always restless; England whose summer is eternal April, whose winter is a sleep broken with distant laughter?

BEVERLEY NICHOLS, *Cry Havoc*

Ad Infinitum

First it rained, and then it snew,
Then it friz, and then it thew,
And then it friz again.

Author Unknown

DANCING BOY

But surely it was a dream?

by M. E. MACWHIRTER

THE gongs boomed out from the great doorway of the monastery and the watching lamas fell silent as he came running down the steps into the sunlit courtyard with the other dancing boys. He bowed low before the window of the High Lama as the troupe fanned out to its stations; and immediately the cymbals clashed a beginning, the drums set a rhythm, and the small legs moved briskly to the trumpet music which commanded them from the silver-mounted pallor of fifty human thigh-bones.

He was the smallest of the dancing boys, twirling and bending and capering in the sun, and the silver battle-axe was heavy in his hand; but as he swayed and hopped and postured in his ceremonial robes he swung it in perfect unison with the other silver axes.

Now the music ran slow, and he rose up on the toes of his gay felt boots, pirouetting with his shining axe above his head, whilst the other dancers circled gravely round him. The slow rhythm of the music saddened him, making him think of his home—the home he had not seen for fifteen moons—and his spirits grew heavier than the axe he held upraised, as he waited for the trumpets to release him with a quickening measure.

The circle broke apart and he leapt through the air as his bright pink kite had leapt through the sky above his village on the morning when they had seized him, and carried him away to the monastery. His kite—his first kite—which his mother had made for him and given him that ill-omened day; his kite which now lay lifeless on the floor of the gallery, where, at night, he spread his rug beside the other dancing boys.

One day when he was set free again, one day when he was a man—in ten years, in ten years—he would fly his kite again. The trumpets shrilled untiringly, and his eight year old feet beat out their dancing sentence—in ten years, in ten years—and the little bells at his waist rang mockingly—ten years, ten years!

When they had first seized him, his mother had come to plead for him, the only son of the household; but it was useless; they had turned her away. Was the boy not sound in head and heart, straight

limbed and without blemish? She should give thanks that he, a child of the lowliest of village homes, had been chosen for the honourable ranks of the High Lama's dancing boys.

The wind whipped about him as he danced—how his kite would fly on such a day, how it would tug at his hand demanding to have its way as he ran singing with it across the grass by the river. Thus it would rise on its string—and the boy curved leaping through the air; he was the kite, leaping and soaring, faster and higher, with his arms outstretched and his legs outflung, a small human kite riding the air.

And the lamas in the galleried courtyard about him sat marvelling at his inspired agility; never before had a dancing boy performed so brilliantly, taken wing with such strange exaltation. The satin curtains stirred at the window as scarlet-cheeked and exhausted, he bowed low with the other dancers before the eyes of the High Lama.

When they told him he had been summoned to the audience chamber, the boy was afraid. How could he appear before the High Lama, who, knowing all concealed thoughts, would know that when the lowliest of his dancing boys had been twirling in the courtyard that morning, he had been thinking, not of the gods whose child he was impersonating, but of a pink paper kite?

The coloured boots came reluctantly along the dark corridor, and faltered to a stop at the doorway. It was only the rough impulse of the instructor-lama's hand that sent him through the heavy curtains into the room.

At first he did not understand as he waited with bent head to hear the terms of his punishment.

"A favour!" the instructor-lama hissed in his ear. "The High Lama wishes most graciously to grant you a favour." The boy stood silent and unbelieving whilst the Abbot of the monastery waited to hear what he would reply.

"Speak!" said the remote, smooth voice again. "Speak! What is it you wish?"

"Wish?" the dancing boy asked himself incredulously. "Wish?" He had only two wishes—to be back at home, and to fly his kite; but it was useless to ask for release. He looked up at the instructor-lama who bent down impatiently to convey his hesitant request; and hearing it shook his head in vigorous reproof.

"What is it he asks?" the High Lama demanded.

"It is nonsense that he asks," the instructor-lama reported disapprovingly. "He asks to be allowed to fly his kite."

"His kite?"

"The paper toy, the hawk-bird toy which the children of the laity fly on strings above the town."

" His wish is easily granted. Each seventh day he shall fly his kite."

" His Eminence is the essence of graciousness," murmured the instructor-lama impersonally, " and if he considers it fitting that one of his dancing boys should fly a kite in the town square like any common ragamuffin child, then . . ."

The High Lama listened motionless in his gilded chair, but his thin voice interrupted firmly, " If that offends your sense of the seemly, let the kite be flown in the courtyard."

" In the courtyard ! " echoed the instructor-lama respectfully. " In the courtyard where the infant novices learn their lessons, and the older novices walk in meditation ? Is it desirable that they should be submitted to such diversion and distraction ? Will not every mind, old and young, be turned to play and not to prayer, and soon the whole monastery be demanding to fly paper kites to the dishonour of the golden dragons on the roof ? And all because of a frivolous dancing boy—a child of the laity."

The High Lama listened quiet-eyed and inscrutable, and when his voice came again it was distant but determined :

" These are no doubt reasonable objections—reasonable in your limited understanding—so the novices shall not be tempted, the courtyard shall not be disturbed, nor the golden dragons disgraced ; yet the boy shall fly his kite as I have decreed. Every seventh day he shall fly it in the inviolate seclusion of my summer garden."

The instructor-lama gasped in astonishment. Could his Abbot seriously mean the retreat where he sat each afternoon to meditate beside his lake, where even he, and the other mighty ones of the monastery, were forbidden to set foot ? His brow was like thunder as he marched the dancing boy away. And the dancing boy's mind was troubled by the granting of so exalted and embarrassing a privilege.

It was very quiet in the garden with the flowers and the trees and the birds ; the echoes that came from the monastery, the copper thunder of the ceremonial trumpets, the silver chiming of the bells, the leaden monotony of the chants, all lost their individuality there and faded to colourless sound.

This was the sixth afternoon the dancing boy had flown his kite, and the privilege no longer embarrassed him, for he was free to be himself again in the garden—a boy with a kite, coming and going as he willed.

Only once had he seen the High Lama. One day when he had run up the stone steps of the bridge arching across the lake, to fly his kite above the water, he had seen him sitting there in his pavilion, quiet-eyed and motionless in meditation, with his embroidery in one

hand and the other arm outstretched to the full length of a silken stitch, poised as it had been poised when some new truth had overcome him. Surely his arm held out so motionless for so long a time, must tire, the dancing boy had thought, as his own arm tired when he held up the silver axe. Yet the Abbot had sat on in unmoving silence, and about him a choir of rose-finches had swung in their burnished cages.

But today the High Lama was pacing to and fro beside the lake as the kite rode the sky and the dancing boy ran singing with it across the grass. When the wind strained at it, tugging it higher, the boy leapt up with the string in his hand; and the sun threw his shadow dancing beside him—a boy and his shadow, dancing with his kite in the wind, as once they had danced in freedom long ago.

Higher rode the kite in its exhilaration, higher than the trees and the birds and the houses, higher even than the loftiest prayer-flags of the town. And watching it outriding the exalted banners above the monastery roof, an idea came to the boy; he began furling the string of the kite, winding it urgently back again on to its stick.

When the square of coloured paper lay beside him on the grass he loosened his robe and drew out the amulet which he wore at his neck. He lifted it over his head, and slipping the threads aside, he unfolded the grimy chart to look at the symbols and diagrams of the Great Luck Flag. There was the Airy Horse carrying its Lotus Flower prayer; if he sent it riding with his kite up to the realm of the goddess Drölma—Drölma-the-Deliverer—surely she would pay attention, and, somehow arrange for his return home.

As the boy sought for a means of attaching the prayer to the kite, he did not hear the soundless footsteps on the grass; and the shadow falling suddenly across him drew him up in dismay.

It was the High Lama who found a way of securing the prayer to the kite; crossing the bridge to his pavilion he brought back a strand of silk which he bound firmly about the paper. He did not speak as he worked, but when he stepped back to watch the Airy Horse take the wind, he smiled at the boy, and as the prayer chart rose, he murmured the words of a mantra to speed it on its way.

Tugging and yielding, up and up by degrees, faster and higher rode the kite, as if the eager prayer-horse were impatient to achieve its destination. And when the last hand's turn of string was fully unfurled, the boy was alone in the garden. Still the kite tugged at his hands, and he ran up the steps of the arching stone bridge to give it greater ascendency; and from the bridge he watched it sailing in the sky above him, while below him, he saw its coloured reflection floating on the lake.

Absorbed with his two kites, he failed to hear the summons of

the evening trumpets, or to realize he should, even now, be twirling with his silver axe in the courtyard. He turned in dismay when he heard the angry voice of the instructor-lama calling his name, and turning, he lost his foothold, and went crashing headlong down the stone steps of the bridge.

When the blackness lightened he tried to stumble up. but his foot burned as fiercely as the New Year fires, and he sank back into the blackness again.

The next time that he opened his eyes the boy saw his mother stirring the broth on the fire beside him. He looked about him, thinking that, perhaps, such delights belonged to a dream; but dreams have no smells, and the broth was as comforting to his nostrils as his mother to his eyes; and there beyond the doorway was the valley, with his father's voice singing in the fields.

His foot still burned, but less fiercely now, and he smiled at his mother as he lay there in contentment, only half listening to her words—" And it will be another moon before the pain dies, so they sent you home."

The third day after he was able to leave the house, two messengers came down from the monastery bearing a gift from the High Lama.

The dancing boy looked at his present with amazement; it was a kite, a coral coloured kite, made of silk and skilfully embroidered, bright and rich as a holy banner. Running his hand ecstatically across its stitches, he thought of the High Lama and of the prayer which he had helped to speed on its way—the prayer that Drölma-the-Deliverer had answered without pause.

Down by the river the string tugged impatiently at his hand as the silken kite rode high and powerful on the wind; and more exuberantly than ever his lively feet had danced in the gay felt boots, his happiness now danced in his heart, as he dragged himself, crippled and stumbling, beneath the coral kite in the turquoise sky.

* * *

YOUNG IDEAL

When the caller rang the doctor's bell, the door was opened by the small daughter.

" Is your father at home ? " asked the caller pleasantly.

" No, sir," replied the child. " He's out at the moment performing an emergency appendicectomy."

" Goodness," said the visitor, " that's a very big word for a little girl like you to use ! Do you know what it means ? "

" Oh, yes," came the reply. " It means fifty pounds."

Thames Barge

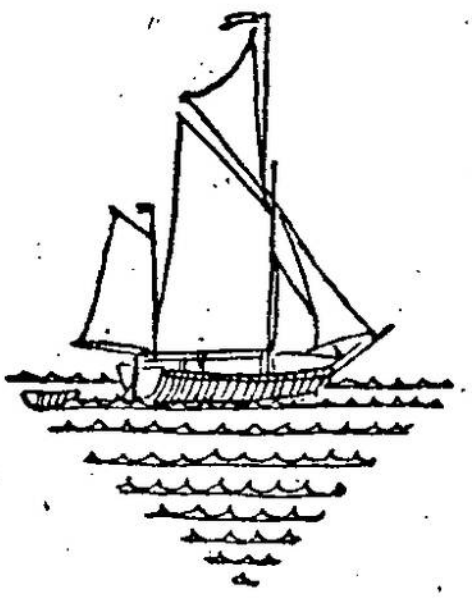
LYING off the fairway, waiting for the flood,
Anchor chain aquiver as the ebb runs fast,
New tanned spritsail the colour of dried blood
And a halo of dawn mist hung about her mast.

Loaded to the gunwales, a light wind flawing,
Ghosting through marshes where the wild duck flight,
Leaning up the river, her topsail drawing,
Through star silvered waters in the dark of night.

Faded old staysail with a torn foot flapping,
Snowstorms glooming and a falling glass,
Sneaking up the shallows, a short sea slapping
And a wash of water as the big ships pass.

Dreaming on the saltings, her black ribs showing,
Green weeds hanging from a name plate proud,
The mournful dirge of an east wind blowing,
With cormorants and white sea birds her lonely shroud.

HUGH FALKUS



IN A SPANISH GARDEN

By a trick of fate, life had been handed back to him

by NEIL M. GUNN

WHEN drowning seemed inevitable, all my past life did not flash before me, but I did have the very distinct thought: how strange that I should have come all this way to die! I had not yet taken in any water; in a lazy way, out of the corner of an eye, I could see the next wave coming at the last moment—quite a long moment—and vaguely prepared to rise with it. The wave lifted me with unexpected buoyancy, softly, as if in some mysterious way the arms and breast of the sea were one, and let me down gently, if rather deeply, and then it swung on—and raced—and exploded on the sand. I could see the two Spanish girls, stretched out, mostly naked; I could see the two men who had come with me also stretched out, but covered over against the sun; I could see Henry's café.

Henry was a remarkable fellow. I forget his full name, but Henry was how in our Scots way we pronounced it. And I do remember that he was a German by birth who had served on a submarine in the first World War and who thereafter had taken on Spanish nationality. He spoke to us intimately of Seville, of how he had prepared splendid feasts for Spanish royalty, and we believed him absolutely because of his wonderful knowledge of wines, but particularly of sherries.

Wine and colour. This may sound romantic, but believe me there is something deeper to it than that, something that haunts young men of the grey north lands more intimately even than politics, and the three of us could on occasion talk politics until the cows came home—and went out again in the morning. Our pet ideal—it seemed fresher than any daisy then—was nothing less than the brotherhood of man, an honest to God friendship between all the nations. So we crossed the Scottish border in happy adventurous mood on an inter-war summer morning and zoomed down the straight Roman roads of England en route for a sun that shines day after day with certainty; plumps the grape and lets you sit down without first feeling if the ground is wet.

We did not stop anywhere more than one night. Across the Channel from Newhaven to Dieppe, through Chartres and the Loire valleys and then south to Bordeaux and Bayonne, across the frontier into Spain, and on to San Sebastian where we thought we might rest. But San Sebastian was too populous or popular, lacking the final something we were vaguely seeking, and so we ran on into the little town of Zarauz and drew up on the front. Henry's café was opposite and we went inside.

Then we struck it, the real basis of friendship between nations. On the shelves behind the counter were whole rows of bottles, bottles of all shapes and colours, and—here we gaped—between the bottles were stuck little flags of all the nations. It was so remarkable that we couldn't help laughing, for now we knew that this was where we were going to stop. Though in that first blush we could not ask Henry, who had a fair command of colloquial English, if his little flags meant more than good café business.

When I realized I was making no headway, when my arms were so numb that I could hardly push them forward, the length of this varied journey came upon me. There seemed something strange and enigmatic in my having deliberately planned to travel so far in order to end here. Now, for the first time, did I realize that a word like " destiny," which we use so lightly, belonged to another order of things. It is quite impossible to explain how profound and certain this realization was and how calmly at that moment it came upon me.

Certainly I had had too much sun. Over a glorious beach of sand at Zarauz you wade out a long way before you can take your first header through a solid Atlantic comber. If the rock-bound Scottish coast where I was brought up does not encourage long swimming, it does give a proper respect for the sea. I had in my time been nearly drowned twice ; so I was taking no foolish chances.

But the sun had probably eaten through white northern skin into muscle more than we were aware, though we had been warned of this and in these first days had fully sunbathed only for short periods. But it is tantalizing to see two Spanish beauties, with the very minimum of draping, taking the sun full on as if time didn't exist, while we had to huddle every now and then under shirt and towel. Once the younger of the two—perfectly shaped and with that dark eyed slumbrous beauty which story books revel in—swept her eyes across us. The sheer aristocratic intolerance of that negligent glance did contrive to define and to wither barbarian impertinence in a way that was wonderful enough ; while in actual fact our barbarian shyness was so great that we felt it might be bad manners ostentatiously to move away ; so we

just sat—or huddled—on, admiring the sea and no doubt talking and laughing—negligently—a little louder.

For Zarauz is, or was, an aristocratic place. Now and then I have thought I might find out about it, but something has kept me back; perhaps the remarkable experience of the Spanish garden, with the final almost clairvoyant insight it gave me into Henry's character.

"Once," explained Henry, "the Spanish nobility came here. Nobles' houses—you see them—every place. But now—" His gesture was that of a story that has been told. "Try, please."

And we tried the *Tio Pepe* which he set before us in thin glasses. We may have believed fondly that we knew a dry sherry when we met one, but this—it searched out the tongue, the palate, and left them cleaner than they had ever been—had an aftermath beyond wonder.

"Too dry for me," said Jock.

A faint withering came to Henry's eyes, an imperceptible uplift to his shoulders, as he smiled. Through more than one avenue of the senses does the barbarian declare himself. But Henry had a great tolerance. After all, he had served at sea. So he turned to the bottles behind him and sought out one which he brought to the counter. "This—many sherries. They—they—"

"A blend!"

And that word, so easy to the Scots tongue, was exactly what Henry meant. "It is more—sweet," he explained, with the smile whose hopefulness was the connoisseur's final judgement of our palate.

But what a perfect wine!

So we had been taking it easy and perhaps absorbing a little too much sun. Much walking was not necessary. Not that we slept at Henry's; we had rooms a little further on in what could well have been a grandee's summerhouse. Altogether we may have been growing soft; allowing the sun, of whose strength we were a trifle ignorant, to rot the muscle just a little.

We had been in the sea three times that forenoon—a very blue sea, with flashing wave after wave curling over, crashing into froth on the magnificent strand. It was time to call in on Henry, for lunch was barely an hour away. But the heat had induced such a drowsy tiredness that I decided on one more plunge; the others merely turned over to bake their backs. One of them had a book.

After heading through a comber and while still almost within my depth, I turned slowly to swim parallel to the shore. I was taking no chances. How renewing the sea! As perfect to the body as Henry's wine to the palate. I kept on swimming until I

felt pleasantly tired, then turned for the shore. When my toes should have been scraping the sand, I made to stand upright—and found no bottom.

I decided, of course, that I could not have been swimming as parallel to the shore as I had thought, so I struck out in earnest. It was then I found how slow, how oddly languid, my muscles were. That morning I had done my best to massage my right shoulder with sunburn cream, for in near the bone was not so much diffused pain as an awkward stiffness like incipient rheumatics. There is a Spanish proverb to the effect that only an Englishman and a dog keep to the sunny side of the street. We had joked about it, saying that at least we were not English. I tried for bottom again, more cautiously this time, and did not find it.

Not exactly panic yet, but definitely concern. Only now did I realize how far away my friends were. Between me and the figures on the sand many wave-tops went hurtling on, a whole bay of them, for that shore shelves slowly. An overhand reach with the right arm comes naturally to me, so I did my best, keeping my head well down in the plough through.

When next I surveyed the shore it seemed farther away than ever, and the thought dawned on me that I was not only making no headway but was being slowly carried out to sea. I needed a rest very badly; but if in fact I was being borne away . . .

It was a difficult position in several ways. I hated the idea of shouting for help while there was still a kick left, and having been in one or two tough corners I had learned how the will can blindly keep the body going; yet I didn't want to disappear without giving my friends some inkling of the real state of affairs. But, anyway, short of magic, I felt one just couldn't be carried out to sea on such an open beach. Hang it, we and others—and doubtless the whole Spanish nobility—had been swimming around there.

But the time came when I shouted. The third shout had all I could give it. No one heard me; and I heard only the obliterating crash of the waves.

So it was like that. At such a pass a man grows cunning and cool, for he still has some earthly time. I had been keeping an eye on the waves, for I knew that if a few bubbles of froth went the wrong way and caught my breath I would instantly suffocate and sink. As it was, I was losing my buoyancy, settling down. But now I consciously observed that around me the waves heaved but were not near breaking point, whereas some way to my right they were already peaking up. Shallower water over there? . . . Perhaps I had got into a deep sea-going current? . . . I altered course from a direct bearing on the beach to an angle of perhaps forty five degrees, to an angle, anyway, that brought Henry's café

head on. Then I got down to it. I knew it was my last chance.

Now and then I vaguely felt I should estimate progress, but didn't lest I lose an ounce of strength—or find out too much. I hardly know. But it was during this tack that these odd notions of destiny came to me. They were—and are—extraordinarily clear.

One vision I had was so vivid that it remains, with the subsequent unearthly clarity of the Spanish garden in the dawn, preternaturally distinct beyond anything else I saw in Zarauz, including the *Tio Pepe* in the glass, or even—for this is no romance—the face of the señorita whose dark eyes had so disturbingly swept us. Perhaps Nature in her curious way was preparing me for acceptance.

A new kind of movement in the sea disturbed me, a sort of cross-welter, and I lifted my chin, lifted my mouth out of water that was tending to slump over it, and stared at the beach. Human beings, houses, lay there—quite still in the sunlight, like oversized toys; but I felt, with a new gulping weakness, that I had won nearer. My legs went down of their own volition; the big toe of my right foot touched something that yielded before the great swirl swept me away and back. My mouth ripped out a yell. But I managed to right myself.

I saw Jock sit up, stand up. He was stark naked. Nor did he wait upon the order of his going. He charged. He came down that beach, arms and legs flying, and the panic forces that had so suddenly mustered around me fled before that gallant sight. So, I gathered later, did the Spanish ladies, for at last the barbarian had emerged naked and unashamed.

The sea frothed from him; then he was flat, cleaving straight for me. I may have looked as all-in as I was, for he asked no questions; he merely grabbed my right wrist. He obviously knew nothing of life saving—and clearly cared less—for once he had got his grip he hit out for that shore like a great game dog with a shot pheasant. It probably just hadn't occurred to him to take me in his mouth.

But if body and arms were numb, my brain was clear again, though I found it difficult to make audible words. That I should drown was my own affair, but that Jock . . . At last I got words through to him and he understood them. By putting my open right hand on his shoulder, I freed all his limbs for action and left my own legs to kick when they could. Then he got properly down to it and blew the Atlantic from his mouth.

In his bayonet-charge through the conventions, Jock had no doubt publicised the affair somewhat, for now I saw a Basque, a tough small ageless man, with wide brow and pointed chin, very

dark, come running in lightly. When the treacherous swirl of water had swept over his thighs he stopped dead.

Holding his shirt by a wrist-band, he cast it towards Jock, leaning far forward as he did so, with the graceful action of a primitive man throwing his net to catch fish. I was greatly taken with the action, even if the shirt fell short. Jock had reared a bit, and I did my best to expel the ocean. But at the second—or third—throw Jock got the tail of the Basque's shirt in his fist, and that small dark man waded to land hauling in his heavy catch.

Where I grounded I could have lain; but I know I was on my feet when I saw the Basque's face talking, for it told of sea serpents and other horrible monsters in the weird sounds that a child might have understood.

Henry explained the mystery when we got to his café. The waves that rush upon the beach tend, on the east side, to swirl round and ebb out in a deep stream. No doubt at certain states of the tide that ebb will be fairly strong.

"Two—two persons—drowned there last year. They should have the signals up." He was gravely concerned as he looked at me where I sat understanding more or less; then that German, who was a naturalized Spaniard, turned to his shelves and took down a bottle of French brandy.

I don't remember a great deal about the rest of that day. As the evening drew on I was pursued by the fact that I hadn't thanked the Basque properly—if I had thanked him at all. In a curious way speech had, as it were, receded. Compared with life, speech was an odd sort of gabble. The learned say that the Basque language is holophrastic, which means, apparently, that a sentence is a single verbal unit. That's how it had sounded to me in the water.

Had I known Basque I would have ventured from the darkness of that side street into the low room where dark men sat at tables drinking wine out of bulbous glass containers with spouts. Their faces turned to me as I stood on the threshold, and I had the illusion that the face of the Basque whom I sought was multiplied many times. In the moment when no one moved the picture was extraordinarily arresting. I bowed and withdrew.

Dancing in some open space or square—no intolerance in a señorita's face here. Men of different tribes may sniff at one another like straight legged dogs, but a woman has a mode of communication that is pre-Basque and is understood even by a barbarian.

But as I got to bed I realized I had not found my Basque.

When I awoke, the dawn was in my window. It was a tall

window; and now I come to the abnormal experience which I know I cannot hope to communicate, but I'll do my best. No doubt somewhere in me it was understood that life had been handed back as a pure gift. That may have induced a feeling of bodily lightness, of a delightful yet precious inconsequence. Wide awake, I got up and went to the window.

I was looking out on an old Spanish garden. The dawn light was quite clear, but there was as yet no sun; only the freshness of the morning. The garden was very still. Walls, an architectural disposition of line and mass, held this stillness much as a great casket might hold jewels. Only, the jewels were flower petals. In particular, some small trees had a feathery green foliage of wonderful delicacy and completeness. My eye kept coming back to them in a sort of wonder that no lightest feather moved. Then I saw that the stillness was also beyond the garden.

Now there came over me the very odd feeling that the stillness itself was holding something, containing it as the walls contained the garden, and I realized that what it was holding was time. Time was arrested, not by a kind of enchantment, but in actuality. I was aware, too, that that is not what it really was. In our temporal world you cannot hold up time. It is very difficult to analyse, to be precise, here, for analysis breaks down and is therefore the very opposite of the feeling which I experienced. Quite simply, then, I knew with an absolute conviction as I stood at that window gazing out on the old Spanish garden that there exists an order of things outside our conception of time.

There was nothing in the ordinary sense "religious" about this experience; what may be more astonishing is that there was nothing even personal. The moment—however long it lasted—was one of absolute impersonality; and that this at least was no mere figment of fancy was proved in a humorous enough fashion. When at last I moved I felt the stiff drag of that right shoulder, and, still under the spell, my hand groped vaguely for the tube of sunburn cream. Movement was slow, with a sort of ethereal yet luxurious slowness.

Suddenly I was aware of a harsh dragging pain, of a gluey cream that would not spread, and removing my eyes at last from the garden I perceived that I had picked up a tube of toothpaste. In the ordinary way of the world, this is the place where only the other fellow laughs. But as I sat down on my bed, still looking towards the garden, I was overcome by a delicious, a divine, sense of humour.

There are only two things which Jock has normally to be dragged away from: a good-going party and his bed. Consider

our surprise, then, when at breakfast we found he had already been out and about. It appears he had discovered, as he was undressing, a leaflet in his pocket, which he had assumed was a religious tract, but turned out to be an advertisement of a bull fight in Pamplona. "I find we can make Pamplona today," he concluded.

"I must see Henry first," I said. For that Basque was still in my mind, and the thought had come to me that Henry would be the very man to arrange my small affair.

Before turning in to Henry's I looked far along the beach to where I had had my swimming adventure yesterday, and saw two slim poles stuck in the sand, some distance apart, each flying a red pennant of danger. I wondered, with a humour that was very friendly, if the Spanish authorities were just the least bit put out by having to fix these poles before Fate had revealed that it was absolutely necessary to do so. *Mañána*—meaning it will do equally well tomorrow—has always had a profound significance for them.

Henry was touched by my difficulty and assured me that he would be able to find the Basque without any trouble and hand him my gift.

When it came to saying goodbye, I wanted to stand Henry one. My eyes ran along the bottles and stopped at a label which, somehow, they must have missed before. It was a label of a well known brand of old Scotch whisky, but with no little flag of the old Scots nation printed above the label—yet there it was. As I stared at it, our whole unsolved argument about Henry rose in my mind. But several things had happened to my sight since I had laid my bet on his pure commercialism and, with the peculiar feeling that the truth was at last to be revealed, I turned from the label to meet Henry's eyes also turning from it.

We looked at each other then. "All the nations," I said.

A smile came into Henry's face, but not the smile that politely acknowledged a man's right to prefer the wrong wine for the wrong reason. I saw his eyes. It was a moment of such complete insight that I even forgot my lost bet. For in that moment, as I stood looking at Henry, it was as if something came up out of the green sea water and in from the old Spanish garden and was there in silence between us; something of that absolute stillness, and within it I was aware, beyond all doubt or argument, that his internationalism *was* real.

Quietly, he murmured, "All the nations."

* * *

Talent is built in solitudè ; character in the stream of the world.

GOETHE

★*The new-fledged lieutenant Hornblower, returned to the fleet after two long years as a prisoner on Spanish soil, finds himself with a new and unpleasant duty on his hands. A heavy task indeed for a junior officer, whose sympathies may yet be engaged by the honeyed logic of a young man about to die.*

But fortune once more favours our hero, and good sense triumphs over sentiment in this "affair of the heart."

HORNBLOWER AND THE BIG DECISION

by C. S. FORESTER

THE Channel fleet was taking shelter at last. The roaring westerly gales had worked up to such a pitch that timber and canvas and cordage could withstand them no longer, and nineteen ships of the line and seven frigates, with Admiral Lord Bridport flying his flag in *H.M.S. Royal George*, had momentarily abandoned that watch over Brest which they had maintained for six years. Now they were rounding Berry Head and dropping anchor in the shelter of Tor Bay.

A landsman, with that wind shrieking round him, might be pardoned for wondering how much shelter was to be found there, but to the weary and weatherbeaten crews who had spent so long tossing in the Biscay waves and clawing away from the rocky coast of Brittany, that foam-whitened anchorage was like paradise. Boats could even be sent in to Brixham and Torquay to return with letters and fresh water; in most of the ships, officers and men had gone for three months without either. Even on that winter day there was intense physical pleasure in opening the throat and pouring down it a draught of fresh clear water, so different from the stinking green liquid doled out under guard yesterday.

The junior lieutenant in *H.M.S. Renown* was walking the deck muffled in his heavy pea-jacket while his ship wallowed at her anchor. The piercing wind set his eyes watering, but he continually gazed through his telescope nevertheless; for, as signal lieutenant, he was responsible for the rapid reading and transmission of messages, and this was a likely moment for orders to be given

regarding sick and stores, and for captains and admirals to start chattering together, for invitations to dinner to be passed back and forth, and even for news to be disseminated.

He watched a small boat claw its way towards the ship from the French prize the fleet had snapped up yesterday on its way up-channel. Hart, master's mate, had been sent on board from the *Renown*, as prizemaster, miraculously making the perilous journey. Now here was Hart, with the prize safely anchored amid the fleet, returning on board to make some sort of report. That hardly seemed likely to be of interest to a signal lieutenant, but Hart appeared excited as he came on board, and hurried below with his news after reporting himself in the briefest terms to the officer of the watch. But only a very few minutes passed before the signal lieutenant found himself called upon to be most active.

It was Captain Sawyer himself who came on deck, Hart following him, to supervise the transmission of the messages. " Mr. Hornblower ! "

" Sir ! "

" Kindly send this signal."

It was for the admiral himself, from the captain ; that part was easy ; only two hoists were necessary to say " *Renown* to Flag." And there were other technical terms which could be quickly expressed—" prize " and " French " and " brig "—but there were names which would have to be spelled out letter for letter. " Prize is French national brig *Espérance II* having on board Barry McCool."

" Mr. James ! " bellowed Hornblower. The signal midshipman was waiting at his elbow, but midshipmen should always be bellowed at, especially by a lieutenant with a very new commission.

Hornblower reeled off the numbers, and the signal went soaring up to the yardarm ; the signal halyards vibrated wildly as the gale tore at the flags. Captain Sawyer waited on deck for the reply ; this business must be important. Hornblower read the message again, for until that moment he had only studied it as something to be transmitted. But even on re-reading it he did not know why the message should be important. Until three months before, he had been a prisoner in Spanish hands for two weary years, and there were gaps in his knowledge of recent history. The name of Barry McCool meant nothing to him.

On the other hand, it seemed to mean a great deal to the admiral, for hardly had sufficient time elapsed for the message to be carried below to him than a question soared up to the *Royal George's* yardarm.

" Flag to *Renown*," Hornblower read those flags as they broke

and was instantly ready for the rest of the message. " Is McCool alive ? "

" Reply affirmative," said Captain Sawyer.

And the affirmative had hardly been hoisted before the next signal was fluttering in the *Royal George*.

" Have him on board at once. Court martial will assemble."

A court martial ! Who on earth was this man McCool ? A deserter ? The capture of a mere deserter would not be a matter for the commander in chief. A traitor ? Strange that a traitor should be court-martialled in the fleet. But there it was.

A word from the captain sent Hart scurrying overside to bring this mysterious prisoner on board, while signal after signal went up from the *Royal George* convening the court martial in the *Renown*.

Hornblower was kept busy enough reading the messages ; he had only a glance to spare when Hart had his prisoner and his sea chest hoisted up over the port side. A youngish man, tall and slender, his hands were tied behind him—which was why he had to be hoisted in—and he was hatless, so that his long red hair streamed in the wind. He wore a blue uniform with red facings—a French infantry uniform, apparently. The name, the uniform and the red hair combined to give Hornblower his first insight into the situation. McCool must be an Irishman.

While Hornblower had been a prisoner in Ferrol, there had been, he knew, a bloody rebellion in Ireland. Irishmen who had escaped had taken service with France in large number. This must be one of them, but it hardly explained why the admiral should take it upon himself to try him instead of handing him over to the civil authorities.

Hornblower had to wait an hour for the explanation, until, at two bells in the next watch, dinner was served in the gun room.

" There'll be a pretty little ceremony tomorrow morning," said Clive, the surgeon. He put his hand to his neck in a gesture which Hornblower thought hideous.

" I hope the effect will be salutary," said Roberts, the second lieutenant. The foot of the table, where he sat, was for the moment the head, because Buckland, the first lieutenant, was absent attending to the preparations for the court martial.

" But why should we hang him ? " asked Hornblower.

Roberts rolled an eye on him.

" Deserter," he said, and then went on. " Of course, you're a newcomer. I entered him myself, into this very ship, in '98. Hart spotted him at once."

" But I thought he was a rebel ? "

" A rebel as well," said Roberts. " The quickest way out of

Ireland—the only way, in fact—in '98 was to join the armed forces."

"I see," said Hornblower.

"We got a hundred hands that autumn," said Smith, another lieutenant.

And no questions would be asked, thought Hornblower. His country, fighting for her life, needed seamen as a drowning man needs air, and was prepared to make them out of any raw material that presented itself.

"McCool deserted one dark night when we were becalmed off the Pointe de Penmarch in Brittany," explained Roberts. "Got through a lower gunport with a grating to float him. We thought he was drowned until news came through from Paris that he was there, up to his old games. He boasted of what he'd done—that's how we knew him to be O'Shaughnessy, as he called himself when we had him."

"Wolfe Tone had a French uniform," said Smith. "And they'd have strung him up if he hadn't cut his own throat first."

"Uniform only aggravates the offence when he's a deserter," said Roberts.

Hornblower had much to think about. First there was the nauseating thought that there would be an execution in the morning. Then there was this eternal Irish problem, about which the more he thought the more muddled he became. If just the bare facts were considered, there could be no problem. In the world at the moment, Ireland could choose only between the domination of England and the domination of France; no other possibility existed in a world at war. And it seemed unbelievable that anyone would wish to escape from English overlordship—absentee landlords and Catholic disabilities notwithstanding—in order to submit to the rapacity and cruelty and venality of the French republic. To risk one life's to effect such an exchange would be a most illogical thing to do, but logic, Hornblower concluded sadly, had no bearing upon patriotism, and the bare facts were the least considerable factors.

And in the same way the English methods were subject to criticism as well. There could be no doubt that the Irish people looked upon Wolfe Tone and Fitzgerald as martyrs, and would look upon McCool in the same light. There was nothing so effective as a few martyrdoms to ennoble and invigorate a cause.

The hanging of McCool would merely be adding fuel to the fire that England sought to extinguish. Two peoples actuated by the most urgent of motives—self-preservation and patriotism—were at grips in a struggle which could have no satisfactory ending for a long time to come.

Buckland, the first lieutenant, came into the gun room with the preoccupied look commonly worn by first lieutenants with a weight of responsibility on their shoulders. He ran his glance over the assembled company, and all the junior officers, sensing that unpleasant duties were about to be allocated, did their unobtrusive best not to meet his eye. Inevitably it was the name of the most junior lieutenant which rose to Buckland's lips.

"Mr. Hornblower," he said.

"Sir!" replied Hornblower, doing his best now to keep resignation out of his voice.

"I am going to make you responsible for the prisoner."

"Sir?" said Hornblower, with a different intonation.

"Hart will be giving evidence at the court martial," explained Buckland—it was a vast condescension that he should deign to explain at all. "The master-at-arms is a fool, as you know. I want McCool brought up for trial safe and sound, and I want him kept safe and sound afterwards. I'm repeating the captain's own words, Mr. Hornblower."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Hornblower, for there was nothing else to be said.

"No Wolfe Tone tricks with McCool," said Smith.

Wolfe Tone had cut his own throat the night before he was due to be hanged, and had died in agony a week later.

"Ask me for anything you may need, Mr. Hornblower," said Buckland.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Side boys!" suddenly roared a voice on deck overhead, and Buckland hurried out; the approach of an officer of rank meant that the court martial was beginning to assemble.

Hornblower's chin was on his breast. It was a hard, unrelenting world, and he was an officer in the hardest and most unrelenting service in that world—a service in which a man could no more say "I *cannot*" than he could say "I *dare not*."

"Bad luck, Horny," said Smith, with surprising gentleness, and there were other murmurs of sympathy from round the table.

"Obey orders, young man," said Roberts quietly.

Hornblower rose from his chair. He could not trust himself to speak, so that it was with a hurried bow that he quitted the company at the table.

"'E's 'ere, safe an' sound, Mr. 'Ornblower," said the master-at-arms, halting in the darkness of the lower 'tween decks.

A marine sentry at the door moved out of the way, and the master-at-arms shone the light of his candle lantern on a keyhole in the door and inserted the key.

"I put 'im in this empty storeroom, sir," went on the master-at-arms. "'E's got two of my corporals along with 'im."

The door opened, revealing the light of another candle lantern. The air inside the room was foul; McCool was sitting on a chest, while two of the ship's corporals sat on the deck with their backs to the bulkhead. The corporals rose at an officer's entrance, but even so, there was almost no room for the two newcomers.

Hornblower cast a vigilant eye round the arrangements. There appeared to be no chance of escape or suicide. In the end, he steeled himself to meet McCool's eyes.

"I have been put in charge of you," he said.

"That is most gratifying to me, Mr.—Mr.—" said McCool, rising from the chest.

"Hornblower."

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr. Hornblower."

McCool spoke in a cultured voice, with only enough of Ireland in it to betray his origin. He had tied back the red locks into a neat queue, and even in the faint candlelight his blue eyes gave strange reflections.

"Is there anything you need?" asked Hornblower.

"I could eat and I could drink," replied McCool. "Seeing that nothing whatsoever has passed my lips since *Espérance II* was captured."

That was yesterday. The man had had neither food nor water for more than twenty four hours.

"I will see to it," said Hornblower. "Anything more?"

"A mattress or a cushion—something on which I can sit," said McCool. He waved a hand towards his sea chest. "I bear an honoured name, but I have no desire to bear it imprinted on my person."

The sea chest was of a rich mahogany. The lid was a thick slab of wood whose surface had been chiselled down to leave his name, B. I. McCool, standing out in high relief.

"I'll send you in a mattress, too," said Hornblower.

A lieutenant in uniform appeared at the door.

"I'm Payne, on the admiral's staff," he explained to Hornblower. "I have orders to search this man."

"Certainly," said Hornblower.

"You have my permission," said McCool.

The master-at-arms and his assistants had to quit the crowded little room to enable Payne to do his work, while Hornblower stood in the corner and watched.

Payne was quick and efficient. He made McCool strip to the skin and examined his clothes with care—seams, linings and buttons.

He crumpled each portion carefully, with his ear to the material, apparently to hear if there were papers concealed inside. Then he knelt down to the chest; the key was already in the lock, and he swung it open. Uniforms, shirts, underclothing, gloves; each article was taken out, examined and laid aside. There were two small portraits of children, to which Payne gave special attention without discovering anything.

"The things you are looking for," said McCool, "were all dropped overside before the prize crew could reach *Espérance II*. You'll find nothing to betray my fellow countrymen, and you may as well save yourself that trouble."

"You can put your clothes on again," said Payne curtly to McCool. He nodded to Hornblower and hurried out again.

"A man whose politeness is quite overwhelming," said McCool, buttoning his breeches.

"I'll attend to your requests," said Hornblower.

He paused only long enough to enjoin the strictest vigilance on the master-at-arms and the ship's corporals before hastening away to give orders for McCool to be given food and water, and he returned quickly.

McCool drank his quart of water eagerly, and made an effort to eat the ship's biscuit and meat.

"No knife. No fork," he commented.

"No," replied Hornblower in a tone devoid of expression.

"I understand."

It was strange to stand there gazing down at this man who was going to die tomorrow, biting not very efficiently at the lump of tough meat which he held to his teeth.

The bulkhead against which Hornblower leaned vibrated slightly, and the sound of a gun came faintly down to them. It was the signal that the court martial was about to open.

"Do we go?" asked McCool.

"Yes."

"Then I can leave this delicious food without any breach of good manners."

They climbed the ladders to the main deck, two marines leading, McCool following them, Hornblower following him, and two ship's corporals bringing up the rear.

"I have frequently traversed these decks," said McCool, looking round him, "with less ceremonial."

Hornblower was watching carefully lest he should break away and throw himself into the sea.

The court martial had begun. There was much gold lace and curt efficient routine, as the *Renown* swung to her anchors and the

timbers of the ship transmitted the sound of the rigging vibrating in the gale. Evidence of identification came first, followed by a series of curt questions.

" Nothing I could say would be listened to amid these emblems of tyranny," said McCool in reply to the president of the court.

It needed no more than fifteen minutes to condemn a man to death: " The sentence of this court is that you, Barry Ignatius McCool, be hanged by the neck—"

The storeroom to which Hornblower escorted McCool back was now a condemned cell. A hurrying midshipman asked for Hornblower almost as soon as they arrived there.

" Captain's compliments, sir, and he'd like to speak to you."

" Very good," said Hornblower.

" The Admiral's with him, sir," added the midshipman in a burst of confidence.

Admiral the Honourable Sir William Cornwallis was indeed in the captain's cabin, along with Payne and Captain Sawyer. He went straight to the point the moment Hornblower had been presented to him.

" You're the officer charged with carrying out the execution ? " he asked.

" Yes, sir."

" Now look'ee here, young sir—"

Cornwallis was a popular admiral, strict but kindly, and of unflinching courage and towering professional ability. Under his nickname of " Billy Blue " he was the hero of uncounted anecdotes and ballads. But having got so far in what he was intending to say, he betrayed a hesitation alien to his character. Hornblower waited for him to continue.

" Look'ee here," said Cornwallis again. " There's to be no speechifying when he's strung up."

" No, sir ? " said Hornblower.

" A quarter of the hands in this ship are Irish," went on Cornwallis. " I'd as lief have a light taken into the magazine as have McCool make a speech to 'em."

" I understand, sir," said Hornblower.

But there was a ghastly routine about executions. From time immemorial the condemned man had been allowed to address his last words to the onlookers.

" String him up," said Cornwallis, " and that'll show 'em what to expect if they run off. But once let him open his mouth—That fellow has the gift of the gab, and we'll have this crew unsettled for the next six months."

" Yes, sir."

"So see to it, young sir. Fill him full o' rum, perhaps. But let him speak at your peril."

"Aye, aye sir."

Payne followed Hornblower out of the cabin when he was dismissed.

"You might stuff his mouth with oakum," he suggested. "With his hands tied he could not get it out."

"Yes," said Hornblower, his blood running cold.

"I've found a priest for him," went on Payne, "but he's Irish too. We can't rely on him to tell McCool to keep his mouth shut."

"Yes," said Hornblower.

"McCool's devilish cunning. No doubt he'd throw everything overboard before they captured him."

"What was he intending to do?" asked Hornblower.

"Land in Ireland and stir up fresh trouble. Lucky we caught him. Lucky, for that matter, we could charge him with desertion and make a quick business of it."

"Yes," said Hornblower.

"Don't rely on making him drunk," said Payne, "although that was Billy Blue's advice. Drunk or sober, these Irishmen can always talk. I've given you the best hint."

"Yes," said Hornblower, concealing a shudder.

He went back into the condemned cell like a man condemned himself. McCool was sitting on the straw mattress Hornblower had had sent in, and the two ship's corporals still had him under their observation.

"Here comes Jack Ketch," said McCool with a smile that almost escaped appearing forced.

Hornblower plunged into the matter in hand; he could see no tactful way of approach.

"Tomorrow—" he said.

"Yes, tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow you are to make no speeches," he said.

"None? No farewell to my countrymen?"

"No."

"You are robbing a condemned man of his last privilege."

"I have my orders," said Hornblower.

"And you propose to enforce them?"

"Yes."

"May I ask how?"

"I can stop your mouth with tow," said Hornblower brutally.

McCool looked at the pale, strained face. "You do not appear to me to be the ideal executioner," said McCool, and then a new

idea seemed to strike him. "Supposing I were to save you that trouble?"

"How?"

"I could give you my parole to say nothing."

Hornblower tried to conceal his doubts as to whether he could trust a fanatic about to die.

"Oh, you wouldn't have to trust my bare word," said McCool bitterly. "We can strike a bargain, if you will. You need not carry out your half unless I have already carried out mine."

"A bargain?"

"Yes. Allow me to write to my widow. Promise me to send her the letter and my sea chest here—you can see it is of sentimental value—and I, on my side, promise to say no word from the time of leaving this place here until—until—" Even McCool faltered at that point. "Is that explicit enough?"

"Well—" said Hornblower.

"You can read the letter," added McCool. "You saw that other gentleman search my chest. Even though you send these things to Dublin, you can be sure that they contain nothing of what you would call treason."

"I'll read the letter before I agree," said Hornblower.

It seemed a way out of a horrible situation. There would be small trouble about finding a coaster destined for Dublin; for a few shillings he could send letter and chest there.

"I'll send you in pen and ink and paper," said Hornblower.

It was time to make the other hideous preparations: to have a whip rove at the portside fore yardarm, and to see that the line ran easily through the block; to weight the line and mark a ring with chalk on the gangway where the end rested; to see that the noose ran smooth; to arrange with Buckland for ten men to be detailed to pull when the time came. Hornblower went through it all like a man in a nightmare.

Back in the condemned cell, McCool was pale and wakeful, but he could still force a smile.

"You can see that I had trouble wooing the muse," he said.

At his feet lay a couple of sheets of paper, and Hornblower, glancing at them, could see that they were covered with what looked like attempts at writing poetry. The erasures and alterations were numerous.

"But here is my fair copy," said McCool, handing over another sheet.

My darling wife, the letter began. *It is hard to find words to say farewell to my very dearest—*

It was not easy for Hornblower to force himself to read that letter. It was as if he had to peer through a mist to make out the words. But they were only the words of a man writing to his beloved, whom he would never see again. That at least was plain. He compelled himself to read through the affectionate sentences. At the end it said :

I append a poor poem by which in the years to come you may remember me, my dearest love. And now goodbye, until we shall be together in Heaven.

Your husband, faithful unto death,
Barry Ignatius McCool.

Then came the poem—

Ye heavenly powers ! Stand by me when I die !
The bee ascends before my rolling eye.
Life still goes on within the heartless town.
Dark forces claim my soul. So strike 'em down.
The sea will rise, the sea will fall. So turn
Full circle. Turn again. And then will burn
The lambent flames while hell will lift its head.
So pray for me while I am numbered with the dead.

Hornblower read through the turgid lines and puzzled over their obscure imagery. But he wondered if he would be able to write a single line that would make sense if he knew he was going to die in a few hours.

" The superscription is on the other side," said McCool, and Hornblower turned the sheet over. The letter was addressed to the Widow McCool, in some street in Dublin.

" Will you accept my word now ? " asked McCool.

" Yes," said Hornblower.

The horrible thing was done in the grey hours of the morning.

" Hands to witness punishment."

The pipes twittered and the hands assembled in the waist, facing forward. The marines stood in lines across the deck. There were masses and masses of white faces, which Hornblower saw when he brought McCool up from below. There was a murmur when McCool appeared.

Around the ship lay boats from all the rest of the fleet, filled with men—men sent to witness the punishment, but ready also to storm the ship should the crew stir. McCool stood in the chalk ring on the gangway. Then came the signal gun, and the rush of feet as the ten hands heaved away on the line. And McCool died, as he had promised, without saying a word.

The body hung at the yardarm, and as the ship rolled in the swell that came round Berry Head, so the body swung and dangled, doomed to hang there until nightfall, while Hornblower, sick and pale, began to seek out a coaster which planned to call at Dublin from Brixham, so that he could fulfil his half of the bargain. But he could not fulfil it immediately; nor did the dead body hang there for its allotted time.

The wind was backing northerly and was showing signs of moderating. A westerly gale would keep the French fleet shut up in Brest; a northerly one might well bring them out, and the Channel fleet must hurry to its post again. Signals flew from the flagships.

"Hands to the capstan!" bellowed the bosuns' mates in twenty four ships. "Hands make sail!"

With double-reefed topsails set, the ships of the Channel fleet formed up and began their long slant down-Channel. In the *Renown* it had been "Mr. Hornblower, see that *that* is disposed of." While the hands laboured at the capstan the corpse was lowered from the yardarm and sewn into a weighted bit of sailcloth. Clear of Berry Head it was cast overside without ceremony or prayer. McCool had died a felon's death and must be given a felon's burial. And, close-hauled, the big ships clawed their way back to their posts amid the rocks and currents of the Brittany coast. And on board the *Renown* there was one unhappy lieutenant, at least, plagued by dreadful memories.

In the tiny cabin which he shared with Smith there was something that kept Hornblower continually reminded of that morning: the mahogany chest with the name "B. I. McCool" in high relief on the lid. And in Hornblower's letter case lay that last letter and the rambling, delirious poem. Hornblower could send neither on to the widow until the *Renown* should return again to an English harbour, and he was irked that he had not yet fulfilled his half of the bargain. The sight of the chest under his cot jarred on his nerves; its presence in their little cabin irritated Smith.

Hornblower could not rid his memory of McCool; nor, beating about in a ship of the line on the dreary work of blockade, was there anything to distract him from his obsession. Spring was approaching and the weather was moderating.

When he opened his leather case and found that letter staring at him again, he felt undiminished that revulsion of spirit. He turned the sheet over; in the half dark of the little cabin he could hardly read the gentle words of farewell. He knew that strange poem almost by heart, and he peered at it again, sacrilege though it seemed to try to analyse the thoughts of the brave and frightened

man who had written it during his final agony of spirit. "*The bee ascends before my rolling eye.*" What could possibly be the feeling that inspired that strange imagery? "*Turn full circle. Turn again.*" Why should the heavenly powers do that?

A startling thought began to wake to life in Hornblower's mind. The letter, with its tender phrasing, had been written without correction or erasure. But this poem; Hornblower remembered the discarded sheets covered with scribbling. It had been written with care and attention. A madman, a man distraught with trouble, might produce a meaningless poem with such prolonged effort, but then he would not have written that letter. Perhaps—perhaps—

Hornblower sat up straight instead of lounging back on his cot. "*So strike 'em down.*" There was no apparent reason why McCool should have written "*'em*" instead of "*them.*" Hornblower mouthed the words. To say "them" did not mar either euphony or rhythm. There might be a code. But then why the chest? Why had McCool asked for the chest to be forwarded with its uninteresting contents of clothing? There were two portraits of children; they could easily have been made into a package. The chest with its solid slabs of mahogany and its raised name was a handsome piece of furniture, but it was all very puzzling.

With the letter still in his hand, he got down from the cot and dragged out the chest. B. I. McCOOL. Barry Ignatius McCool. Payne had gone carefully through the contents of the chest. Hornblower unlocked it and glanced inside again; he could see nothing meriting particular attention, and he closed the lid again and turned the key. B. I. McCOOL. A secret compartment! In a fever, Hornblower opened the chest again, flung out the contents and examined sides and bottom. It called for only the briefest examination to assure him that there was no room there for anything other than a microscopic secret compartment. The lid was thick and heavy, but he could see nothing suspicious about it. He closed it again and fiddled with the raised letters, without result.

He had actually decided to replace the contents when a fresh thought occurred to him. "*The bee ascends!*" Feverishly Hornblower took hold of the "B" on the lid. He pushed it, tried to turn it. "*The bee ascends!*"

He put thumb and finger into the two hollows in the loops of the "B," took a firm grip and pulled upward. He was about to give up when the letter yielded a little, rising up out of the lid half an inch. Hornblower opened the box again, and could see nothing different. Fool that he was! "*Before my rolling eye.*"

Thumb and forefinger on the " I." First this way, then that way—and it turned !

Still no apparent further result. Hornblower looked at the poem again. " *Life still goes on within the heartless town.*" He could make nothing of that. " *Dark forces claim my soul.*" No. Of course ! " *Strike 'em down.*" That " 'em." Hornblower put his hand on the " M " of " McCool " and pressed vigorously. It sank down into the lid. " *The sea will rise, the sea will fall.*" Under firm pressure the first " C " slid upward, the second " C " slid downward. " *Turn full circle. Turn again.*" Round went one " O," and then round went the other in the opposite direction. There was only the " L " now. Hornblower glanced at the poem. " *Hell will lift its head.*" He guessed it at once ; he took hold of the top of the " L " and pulled ; the letter rose out of the lid as though hinged along the bottom, and at the same moment there was a loud decisive click inside the lid.

Nothing else was apparent, and Hornblower gingerly took hold of the lid and lifted it. Only half of it came up ; the lower half stayed where it was, and in the oblong hollow between there lay a mass of papers, neatly packaged.

The first package was a surprise. Hornblower, peeping into it, saw that it was a great wad of five pound notes—a very large sum of money. A second package also contained notes. There was ample money here to finance the opening moves of a new rebellion. The first thing he saw inside the next package was a list of names, with brief explanations written beside each. Hornblower did not have to read very far before he knew that this package contained the information necessary to start the rebellion. In the last package was a draft proclamation ready for printing. " *Irishmen !* " it began.

Hornblower took his seat on the cot again and tried to think, swaying with the motion of the ship. There was money that would make him rich for life. There was information which, if given to the government, would clutter every gallows in Ireland. Struck by a sudden thought, he put everything back into the chest and closed the lid.

For the moment it was a pleasant distraction, saving him from serious thought, to study the ingenious mechanism of the secret lock. Unless each operation was gone through in turn, nothing happened The " I " would not turn unless the " B " was first pulled out, and it was most improbable that a casual investigator would pull at that " B " with the necessary force. It was most unlikely that anyone without a clue would ever discover how to open the lid, and the joint in the wood was marvellously well

concealed. It occurred to Hornblower that when he should announce his discovery, matters would go badly with Payne, who had been charged with searching McCool's effects. Payne would be the laughing-stock of the fleet, a man both damned and condemned by everyone.

Hornblower thrust the chest back under the cot and, secure now against any unexpected entrance by Smith, went on to try to think about his discovery. That letter of McCool's had told the truth. "*Faithful unto death.*" McCool's last thought had been for the cause in which he died. If the wind in Tor Bay had stayed westerly another few hours, that chest might have made its way to Dublin.

On the other hand, now there would be commendation for him, praise, official notice—all very necessary to a junior lieutenant with no interests behind him to gain him his promotion to captain. And the hangman would have more work to do in Ireland. Hornblower remembered how McCool had died, and felt fresh nausea at the thought. Ireland was quiet now. And the victories of St. Vincent and the Nile and Camperdown had put an end to the imminent danger which England had gone through. England could afford to be merciful. He could afford to be merciful. And the money?

Later on, when Hornblower thought about this incident in his past life, he cynically decided that he resisted temptation because bank notes are tricky things, numbered and easy to trace, and the ones in the chest might even have been forgeries manufactured by the French government. But Hornblower misinterpreted his own motives, possibly in self-defence, because they were so vague and so muddled that he was ashamed of them. He wanted to forget about McCool. He wanted to think of the whole incident as closed.

There were many hours to come of pacing the deck before he reached his decision, and there were several sleepless nights. But Hornblower made up his mind in the end, and made his preparations thoughtfully, and when the time came he acted with decision.

It was a quiet evening when he had the first watch; darkness had closed in on the Bay of Biscay, and the *Renown*, under easy sail, was loitering along over the black water with her consorts just in sight. Smith was at cards with the purser and the surgeon in the gun room. A word from Hornblower sent the two stupidest men of the watch down below to his cabin to carry up the sea chest, which he had laboriously covered with canvas in preparation for this night. It was heavy, for buried among the clothing inside were two twenty four pound shot. They left it in the scuppers at

Hornblower's order. And then, when at four bells it was time for the *Renown* to tack, he was able, with one tremendous heave, to throw the thing overboard. The splash went unnoticed as the *Renown* tacked.

There was still that letter. It lay in Hornblower's writing case to trouble him when he saw it. Those tender sentences, that affectionate farewell; it seemed a shame that McCool's widow should not have the privilege of seeing them and treasuring them. But—but—

When the *Renown* lay in the Hamoaze, completing for the West Indies, Hornblower found himself sitting at dinner next to Payne. It took a little while to work the conversation around in the right direction.

"By the way," said Hornblower with elaborate casualness, "did McCool leave a widow?"

"A widow? No. Before he left Paris he was involved in a notorious scandal with La Gitanita, the dancer. But no widow."

"Oh," said Hornblower.

That letter, then, was as good a literary exercise as the poem had been. Hornblower realized that the arrival of a chest and a letter addressed to the Widow McCool at that particular house in Dublin would have received the attention it deserved from the people who lived there. It was a little irritating that he had given so much thought to the widow, but now the letter could follow the chest overside. And Payne would not be made the laughing-stock of the fleet.

* * *

FIGHTING WORDS!

The Duke of Wellington, when he was very old and incredibly distinguished, was telling how once, at mess in the Peninsula, his servant had opened a bottle of port, and inside found a rat.

"It must have been a very large bottle," remarked a subaltern.

The Duke fixed him with his eye. "It was a damned small bottle."

"Oh," said the subaltern, abashed, "then no doubt it was a very small rat."

"It was a damned large rat," said the Duke. And there the matter has rested ever since.

Told by GILBERT MURRAY,
in *Stoic, Christian and Humanist*

MURDER ON THE FIVE FIFTEEN

"You cannot always be sure," he said, "even of your closest acquaintance"

by M. ST. CLAIR

LATER on, Carr remembered things. Hamilton's dark gloves, for instance, his habit of wearing gloves even in summer, and the way he reeked of Cologne. And, of course, he lived out by Sunnylawn, the unwalled cemetery.

On the other hand, Hamilton worked in a broker's office; he took the eight fifteen to the city and came back on the five fifteen; he read the *Telegraph* on the way in and did the crossword on the way back, just as everyone else did. In fact, except that he was unmarried and didn't play golf, he corresponded to the business man's norm perfectly.

It was the aftermath of the wreck that made Carr think. Whether the engineer misread the signals, or the signals were wrong, nobody ever knew, because the engineer was killed. Carr, who had been reading a most interesting editorial on the government, looked up with his mouth open when the first shock came. There was a long moment when the carriage seemed to hesitate about whether to leave the rails or not. Then it rolled over twice and came to rest on its side.

Hamilton was sitting beside Carr. As the lights went off and flames began to shoot up, he showed himself to be admirably self-possessed. He took off his shoes, got up on the seat and, using a shoe for a hammer, broke out the glass with the heel. Then he hauled himself up through the opening, reached down for Carr, and helped him out too.

There were people still in the train, and Carr lost Hamilton while helping as many others as he could. Then the flames drove him back, and he had to stand there and listen to the screams.

Ten bodies were taken to the mortuary, sixty four persons were sent to hospital, and of these, three subsequently died.

News had been scarce, and a train wreck is always interesting. And when you add a garrulous mortuary attendant to an imaginative reporter, you may get something sensational. Three days after the wreck there was a feature article in the local *Gazette* entitled: *Is there a vampire on the five fifteen?*

Carr read it and snorted indignantly. He thought the article to be in the worst of taste. He said so to Fred Keith, who was sitting next to him.

Keith read the article slowly and shook his head irritatingly. "You can't always tell," he said.

Carr felt outraged. "You mean you believe all that crazy stuff about bodies being drained of their blood in a way for which no wound could account?" he asked. "Fred, I'm surprised!"

"Well, you know how the papers are. But I think it's possible. Suppose there's somebody on this train who's fond of blood. Psychiatrists know about people like that, don't they? And suppose that person took advantage of the wreck to indulge his taste. As the writer points out, there's no reason why a vampire should spend all its time in a graveyard and only come out at night."

It was after that that Carr began to have nightmares about the wreck, dreams in which the whole weight of the burning train lay upon him while he, helpless, watched something more horrid than the flames drawing near.

He tried to put the dreams out of his mind, and partly succeeded. As he walked out past Sunnylawn one spring evening, his mind was occupied with the investment programme he was going to discuss with Hamilton. But beneath his thoughts about dividends and melons there was a nagging little worry about Mary Jane, his sister's seven year old daughter, who was in hospital with what the doctor called aplastic anæmia.

Arriving early, he stood for a moment in front of Hamilton's house, admiring the emerald lawn and sniffing the rich odour of syringas, lilacs, and Viburnum Carlesii. He must press Hamilton once more to tell him what fertilizer he used.

There was no answer to the bell, and after a moment's hesitation Carr tried the door and, finding it unlocked, walked in.

There was nobody in the house. Carr went through the rooms calling "Hamilton!" in careful tones. The cellar occurred to him as a last resort.

Carr looked round the kitchen, saw that the door in the side wall, which obviously led to the cellar, was ajar, and went over to it. From the darkness beneath came a faint but unmistakable drip—drip—drip. "Hamilton!" Carr called.

There was a scurry of noise in the darkness, a pause, and then Hamilton, preceded by a wave of Cologne, came up the stairs.

He shook hands with Carr with apparent cordiality, and installed him in the most comfortable chair in the sitting room.

They went over the investment programme together and in the middle of the discussion Hamilton remarked casually that he'd been trying to stop a persistent leak, probably from an underground

spring, in the corner of his cellar. Carr nodded agreeably. But does a man stop leaks in his cellar in the dark? he wondered. In the dark?

That night he had the dream again, but this time Mary Jane lay beside him in the wreckage of the burning train.

Next day he concluded he must be run down, and asked his secretary to phone Dr. Gleeder for an appointment.

Ellen met him at the door that evening, in tears, and said that his sister had phoned and that Mary Jane was much worse. *Much* worse; they'd had a consultation with three specialists, and the child was to have an immediate transfusion.

Time passed. Carr had the check-up with Gleeder. The doctor thumped him and tapped him and listened to him and gave him a series of laboratory tests. In the end he said that while Carr was certainly nervous, it was nothing that could not be accounted for by the combination of delayed nervous reaction to a serious accident and worry over his niece. He advised an early holiday.

Mary Jane's death deeply shook Carr. After the funeral he had nightmares about the burning train more frequently, and now Mary Jane, her little face distorted with horror, pleaded with him wordlessly to save her—save her—from the *thing*.

The holiday, towards the end of June, did him no good. He came back tanned, but no less nervous than before. The dream had followed him, and the apprehension and guilt.

Hamilton went away for *his* holiday, and for a time Carr improved. He regained some of his lost weight. Ellen remarked sagely that sometimes a holiday didn't really do you any good until after you got home and were, so to speak, rested up from it.

Three weeks later she wrote to her mother saying that her husband was interested in some woman, and did he expect her to believe those fairy tales about working late at the office when he got home at two thirty in the morning with grass stains on his knees and mud on his shoes?

Actually, the dubious dalliance Ellen suspected did not exist. Carr was spending his evenings in a very damp plot in an untenanted portion of Sunnylawn, watching Hamilton's house.

On the third night of his vigil, when the clock in the Sunnylawn carillon tower was striking half past eleven, Hamilton came softly down the steps. He crossed the street into Sunnylawn, passed Carr's hiding place, and turned to the right.

Carr did not dare to get very close. This may have been why he lost Hamilton's trail after the other got near the chapel. He decided to wait.

A little more than an hour later Hamilton returned. As he came abreast of Carr he put up one hand and with its back delicately patted his lips.

Three nights later Hamilton visited Sunnylawn once more. He was gone rather longer than on the previous occasion, but as Carr caught sight of him Hamilton raised his hand and made, once again, the gesture of the well fed.

Carr stayed at home the next night and the next, lying awake in a miserable rigid trance. He could not make up his mind what to do. He did not go to Sunnylawn on the third night either, and when, a little after two, there was a whirring and a fluttering outside his bedroom window, as if something were trying to get in, he almost felt that he had been expecting it.

Next morning the girl at the *Gazette* reception desk took a preliminary look at Carr and hesitated. He looked normal enough, but the expression of his eyes . . .

"Somebody to see you, Mr. Thompson," she said into the phone, cupping her hand round the mouthpiece. "It's about the piece you wrote last winter about the vampire."

Thompson listened to Carr's painful verbal stumbling for several moments and then suggested that they should go out and have a spiced rum.

Over the second drink Carr managed to get to the point.

"Well, of course, Mr. Carr," replied the reporter, "you've got to remember that sometimes newspapers print things that—er—one has to take with a grain of salt . . . Two more of the same, please . . . I don't quite get the point about the dripping noise you heard in his cellar, though. What would that be?"

Carr shook his head. "I don't know. I can't imagine."

"But whatever it is, you feel it's something sinister? Well, I've got to admit, Mr. Carr, that his visits to the cemetery do look rather suspicious." No use discouraging the old fellow too much, Thompson thought; he had a highly developed news sense, and he could almost smell Carr's potential news-worthiness.

"Yes." Carr fingered the stem of his glass. "The main problem, of course, is what to do about him."

"Well, why don't you try putting garlic round your house? They say that keeps them off. Like moth balls."

Carr was not amused. "He killed my niece," he answered soberly. "Do you think, after that, I want to fool around with garlic?"

"I've got it!" Thompson cried suddenly. "Why not try silver bullets? They're poison to werewolves and things like that. It ought to work on vampires."

Carr got up and put on his raincoat. "Thank you," he said.

It occurred to Thompson that the interview had been a mistake.

When Carr went home that night he had in his brief case three silver pesos, a pair of calipers, and a file. Besides these items he was carrying a small alcohol blow-torch and some garlic bulbs. He already had a gun.

It took Carr nearly a week to prepare the bullets satisfactorily. He wanted the bullets to fit well enough so that the gun would not blow up in his face.

On Tuesday night, with the gun and six silver bullets in his pocket, he walked towards Sunnylawn. It was not quite dark when he reached Hamilton's house. He went up to the front door and rang the bell. When Hamilton answered, he said he wanted to discuss the securities again. They went into the house.

" By the way," Carr said when there was a pause in the conversation, " did you stop the leak in your cellar ? "

" The leak ? Why—yes, yes—I did."

" I wondered if I could take a look at it. There's some seepage in our cellar, and I'd like to see how you've fixed yours."

" I'm so sorry, but it wouldn't be convenient just now. You know how basements are, Carr. Mine is in a dreadful mess."

" You're quite sure ? " Carr said. He drew the gun from his pocket and fired. " You filthy vampire ! "

He hit Hamilton in the chest six times. The bullets went into the plaster behind him with a splintering sound.

Hamilton laughed. His body seemed to boil out round the places where he had been hit, frothingly, and then to knit itself around them and grow solid again.

" I'm not a vampire, Carr," he said. " What a stupid mistake ! Do you think I like blood ? " He was so close that Carr caught his body stench above the smell of toilet water and saw, behind the dark glasses, the tiny flames that flickered where his eyes should have been.

" Why, I can't stand the stuff. I won't touch meat until it's been *thoroughly* bled. That was the dripping you heard in my cellar."

Hamilton laughed again. He put his hands—his talons—round Carr's throat. " Your instinct was right, my good fellow, but your conclusion was wrong," he said. " I'm not a vampire, you see, Carr. I'm a ghoul."

* * *

Success covers a multitude of blunders.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, 1856–1950

MADE IN HEAVEN

I took you—how could I otherwise?
For a world to me, and more . . .

ROBERT BROWNING, 1812–1889

. . . Since I writ this I received one from you in which I find I am still the happiest woman that ever was born in having the heart of my dearest Lord and the only joy of my life; which I will rather choose to die than lose . . .

Postscript from a letter from the DUCHESS OF RICHMOND *to her husband*, 1667

The Genius

The old man put his hands under the apron and fell back into the attitude of waiting. It was not time to go yet. He must wait for the dinner train, which had a restaurant car and sometimes an odd passenger who, comforted by his food, was fanciful enough to take the ancient carriage . . .

It would be good to get back and have some tea with Alice. When it had been very cold and raining, she would contrive a cheerful fire for him, some bacon or a neck of mutton stew, and half a pint of beer. She was a wonder. Tired and hungry, nauseated with the damp and endless rain, his heart cried out to her from the old body with love. The apple face, with the white hair drawn tightly backwards to a bun, signified for him all that was left of comfort. Now that he was cold and hungry he sought back to her, like a lost hound coming to horn . . .

It was a pleasant life, because of Alice's genius. Although she was seventy six, she would never have a fire when she was alone in the mornings. She would save her fuel, to light at teatime, and then her old man would come back to a warm room. This was a secret of her own, to which he was not privy; believing that the room was always warm, that her comforts all day were equal to his at night. He was not allowed to know of her cold toes in the winter days. She would pretend that she was too lazy to light the fire before he went out; that it would be lighted immediately she could get the room to herself and start cleaning . . .

It was good in the evenings. The rain and wind could do their worst outside, but inside were the fire and the horsehair chairs.

From below came the stamp of the nag and the smell of the stable. The fire crackled and the cat snoozed. Later it would be put below to keep down the rats, and would go to sleep again instantly, curled up on the horse's back. Mundy would read from the evening paper, or from any other paper which he had managed to pick up at the station. The time would pass, the old heads would nod, they would climb into the same bed together, as they had done for thirty years.

T. H. WHITE, *Farewell Victoria*

Dedication

And you, my Lady, to whose lap I bring
This little treasure of my voyaging,
Of you I take how much, of how great worth—
Of your hands healing, peace of your good care,
Of your hope strength all perilous things to dare,
And fellowship in you with Love and Earth.

JOHN DRINKWATER, 1882–1937, *to his wife*

Very Useful Purposes

. . . I even went a step beyond Whiston in displaying my principles: as he had engraven upon his wife's tomb that she was the only wife of William Whiston, so I wrote a similar epitaph for my wife, though still living, in which I extolled her prudence, economy, and obedience, till death; and having got it copied fair, with an elegant frame, it was placed over the chimney piece, where it answered several very useful purposes. It admonished my wife of her duty to me, and my fidelity to her; it inspired her with a passion for fame, and constantly put her in mind of her end.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH, 1730–1774, *The Vicar of Wakefield*

She Is My All

I went out by the Tower on the Wall,
I saw the girls in flower,
Like flowering rushes they swayed and bent,
But in that hour
I thought on the maid who is my saint,
In her thin white robe and her colouring faint;
She is my all.

From *A Man's Praise of his Poor Wife*, 680 B.C., *translated from the Chinese by* HELEN WADDELL

. . . *Take Him For All In All*

" I was not fifteen when my father found that I had a lover," she said. " He was third mate on the *Tropic Bird*. A good looking boy."

She sighed a little . . .

" My father was a sensible man."

" What did he do ? " I asked.

" He thrashed me within an inch of my life, and then he made me marry Captain Johnson. I did not mind. He . . . used to thrash me regularly. He was a man. He was handsome, six foot three, and when he was drunk there was no holding him. I would be black and blue all over for days at a time. Oh, I cried when he died. I thought I should never get over it . . ."

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM,
The Moon and Sixpence

Duet

You are not mine for favour or caress ;
The noisy road is not for us to share ;
For us is no communion unless
In quiet scene and sober loveliness,
Nor anywhere
Beyond these ramparts raised of our delight,
Our twin delight in simple, gracious things,
Does envy beckon us,
Or appetite.

Here none may trespass : of another sort
Life's vulgar pattern. Rather let this be
In skill and warmth no other ecstacy
Than that our undivided care has wrought.
A finer jewel—rich as the content
That waits for us in fair, untrampled ways.
Be these our days,
Our earth, our oceans and our firmament.

In this remembrance here's a trust to keep,
A flame to light each severed interval,
A thread to bind us, waking or asleep,
And if we dream, are there not dreams for all ?

WILLIAM BOX

★*The march of time and a second world war have swept away many of the familiar landmarks of the Imperial Inde, where Kipling was born, and where he spent a great part of his life. And to many of our older readers this story will bring back nostalgic memories of an almost forgotten world, while our younger readers, in whose esteem he may have suffered a partial eclipse, cannot deny the warmth, humour and remarkable expertness of this master craftsman, or his ability to tell "a rattling good yarn."*

THE TOMB OF HIS ANCESTORS

by RUDYARD KIPLING

THERE are families that have served India faithfully from generation to generation, as dolphins follow in line across the open sea.

Let us take a small and obscure case. There has been at least one representative of the Devonshire Chinns in or near Central India since the days of Lieutenant-Fireworker Humphrey Chinn, of the Bombay European Regiment, who assisted at the capture of Seringapatam in 1799. Alfred Ellis Chinn, Humphrey's younger brother, commanded a regiment of Bombay Grenadiers from 1804 to 1813; and in 1834 John Chinn of the same family—we will call him John Chinn the First—came to light as a level-headed administrator in time of trouble at a place called Mundesur. He died young, but left his mark on the new country, and the Honourable Board of Directors of the Honourable East India Company embodied his virtues in a stately resolution, and paid for the expenses of his tomb among the Satpura hills.

He was succeeded by his son, Lionel Chinn, who left the little old Devonshire home just in time to be severely wounded in the Mutiny. He spent his working life within a hundred and fifty miles of John Chinn's grave, and rose to the command of a regiment of small, wild hill-men, most of whom had known his father. His son John was born in the small thatched-roofed, mud-walled cantonment, which is even today eighty miles from the nearest railway, in the heart of a scrubby, tigerish country. Colonel Lionel Chinn served thirty years and retired. In the Canal his steamer

passed the outward bound troopship, carrying his son eastward to the family duties.

John Chinn the Second was rather clever, but as the eldest son he entered the army, according to Chinn tradition. His duty was to abide in his father's regiment, for the term of his natural life, though the corps was one which most men would have paid heavily to avoid. They were irregulars, small, dark, and blackish clothed in rifle-green with black leather trimmings; and friends called them the "Wuddars," which means a race of low-caste people who dig up rats to eat. But the Wuddars did not resent it. They were the only Wuddars, and their points of pride were these:

Firstly, they had fewer English officers than any native regiment. Secondly, their subalterns were not mounted on parade, as is the general rule, but walked at the head of their men. A man who can hold his own with the Wuddars at their quickstep must be sound in wind and limb. Thirdly, they were the most *pukka shikarris*—out-and-out hunters—in all India. Fourthly—up to one hundredthly—they were the Wuddars—Chinn's Irregular Bhil Levies of the old days, but now, henceforward and for ever, the Wuddars.

No Englishman entered their mess except for love or through family usage. The officers talked to their soldiers in a tongue not two hundred white folk in India understood; and the men were their children, all drawn from the Bhils, who are, perhaps, the strangest of the many strange races in India. They were, and at heart are, wild men, furtive, shy, full of untold superstitions.

The races whom we call natives of the country found the Bhil in possession of the land when they first broke into that part of the world thousands of years ago. The books call them Pre-Aryan, Aboriginal, Dravidian, and so forth; and, in other words, that is what the Bhils call themselves. When a Rajput chief, whose bards can sing his pedigree backwards for twelve hundred years, is set on the throne, his investiture is not complete till he has been marked on the forehead with blood from the veins of a Bhil. The Rajputs say the ceremony has no meaning, but the Bhil knows that it is the last shadow of his old rights as the long-ago owner of the soil.

Centuries of oppression and massacre made the Bhil a cruel and half crazy thief and cattle stealer, and when the English came he seemed to be almost as open to civilization as the tigers of his own jungles. But John Chinn the First, grand-father of our John, went into his country, lived with him, learned his language, shot the deer that stole his poor crops, and won his confidence, so that some Bhils learned to plough and sow, while others were coaxed into the Company's service to police their friends.

When they understood that standing in line did not mean instant execution, they accepted soldiering as a cumbrous but amusing kind of sport, and were zealous to keep the wild Bhils under control. That was the thin edge of the wedge. John Chinn the First gave them written promises that, if they were good from a certain date, the Government would overlook previous offences: and since John Chinn was never known to break his word—he promised once to hang a Bhil, locally esteemed invulnerable, and hanged him in front of his tribe for seven proved murders—the Bhils settled down as steadily as they knew how.

It was slow, unseen work; and though John Chinn's only reward came, as I have said, in the shape of a grave at Government expense, the little people of the hills never forgot him.

Colonel Lionel Chinn knew and loved them too, and they were very fairly civilized, for Bhils, before his service ended. Many of them could hardly be distinguished from low-caste Hindu farmers; but in the south, where John Chinn the First was buried, the wildest still clung to the Satpura ranges, cherishing a legend that some day Jan Chinn, as they called him, would return to his own. In the meantime they mistrusted the white man and his ways. The least excitement would stampede them plundering at random, and now and then killing; but if they were handled well they grieved like children, and promised never to do it again.

The Bhils of the regiment—the uniformed men—were virtuous in many ways, but they needed humouring. They felt bored and homesick unless taken after tigers as beaters; and their cold-blooded daring—all Wuddars shoot tigers on foot: it is their caste-mark—made even the officers wonder. They would follow up a wounded tiger as unconcernedly as though it were a sparrow with a broken wing; and this through a country full of caves and rifts and pits, where a wild beast could hold a dozen men at his mercy. Now and then some little man was brought to barracks with his head smashed in or his ribs torn away; but his companions never learned caution; they contented themselves with settling the tiger.

Young John Chinn was decanted at the verandah of the Wuddars' lonely messhouse from the back seat of a two-wheeled cart, his gun cases cascading all round him. The slender, little, hook-nosed boy looked as forlorn as a strayed goat when he slapped the white dust off his knees, and the car jolted down the glaring road. But in his heart he was contented. After all, this was the place where he had been born, and things were not much changed since he had been sent to England, a child, fifteen years ago.

There were a few new buildings, but the air and the smell and the sunshine were the same; and the little green men who

crossed the parade ground looked very familiar. Three weeks ago John Chinn would have said he did not remember a word of the Bhil tongue, but at the mess door he found his lips moving in sentences that he did not understand—bits of old nursery rhymes, and tail ends of such orders as his father used to give the men.

The Colonel watched him come up the steps, and laughed.

"Look!" he said to the Major. "No need to ask the young un's breed. He's a *pukka* Chinn. Might be his father in the Fifties over again."

"Hope he'll shoot as straight," said the Major. "He's brought enough ironmongery with him."

"Wouldn't be a Chinn if he didn't. Watch him blowin' his nose. Regular Chinn beak. Flourishes his handkerchief like his father. It's the second edition—line for line."

"Fairy tale, by Jove!" said the Major, peering through the slats of the jalousies. "If he's the lawful heir, he'll . . . Now old Chinn could no more pass that chick without fiddling with it than . . ."

"His son!" said the Colonel, jumping up.

"Well, I be blowed!" said the Major. The boy's eye had been caught by a split reed screen that hung on a slew between the verandah pillars, and mechanically he had tweaked the edge to set it level.

Old Chinn had sworn three times a day at that screen for many years; he could never get it to his satisfaction. His son entered the anteroom in the middle of a five-fold silence. They made him welcome for his father's sake and, as they took stock of him, for his own. He was ridiculously like the portrait of the Colonel on the wall, and when he had washed a little of the dust from his throat he went to his quarters with the old man's short, noiseless jungle-step.

"So much for heredity," said the Major. "That comes of three generations among the Bhils."

"And the men know it," said a Wing-officer. "They've been waiting for this youth with their tongues hanging out. I am persuaded that, unless he absolutely beats 'em over the head, they'll lie down by companies and worship him."

"Nothin' like havin' a father before you," said the Major. "I'm a parvenu with my chaps. I've only been twenty years in the regiment, and my revered parent he was a simple squire. There's no getting at the bottom of a Bhil's mind. Now, *why* is the superior bearer that young Chinn brought with him fleeing across country with his bundle?" He stepped into the verandah, and shouted after the man.

"What is it?" he called.

"Plenty bad men here. I going, sar," was the reply. "They have taken Sahib's keys, and say will shoot."

"*Doocid lucid—doocid convincin'. How those up-country* thieves can leg it! He has been badly frightened by someone." The Major strolled to his quarters to dress for mess.

Young Chinn, walking like a man in a dream, had fetched a compass round the entire cantonment before going to his own tiny cottage. The captain's quarters, in which he had been born, delayed him for a little; then he looked at the well on the parade-ground, where he had sat out the evenings with his nurse, and at the ten-by-fourteen church, where the officers went to service if a chaplain of any official creed happened to come along. It seemed very small as compared with the gigantic building he used to stare up at, but it was the same place.

From time to time he passed a knot of silent soldiers, who saluted. They might have been the very men who had carried him on their backs when he was in his first knickerbockers. A faint light burned in his room, and, as he entered, hands clasped his feet, and a voice murmured from the floor.

"Who is it?" said young Chinn, not knowing he spoke in the Bhil tongue.

"I bore you in my arms, Sahib, when I was a strong man and you were a small one—crying, crying, crying! I am your servant, as I was your father's before you. We are all your servants."

Young Chinn could not trust himself to reply, and the voice went on:

"I have taken your keys from that fat foreigner, and sent him away; and the studs are in the shirt for mess. Who should know, if I do not know? And so the baby has become a man, and forgets his nurse; but my nephew shall make a good servant, or I will beat him twice a day."

Then there rose up, with a rattle, as straight as a Bhil arrow, a little white-haired wizened ape of a man, with medals and orders on his tunic, stammering, saluting, and trembling. Behind him a young and wiry Bhil, in uniform, was taking the trees out of Chinn's mess-boots.

Chinn's eyes were full of tears. The old man held out his keys.

"Foreigners are bad people. He will never come back again. We are all servants of your father's son. Has the Sahib forgotten who took him to see the trapped tiger in the village across the river, when his mother was so frightened and he was so brave?"

The scene came back to Chinn in great magic-lantern flashes. "Bukta!" he cried; and all in a breath: "You promised nothing should hurt me. *Is* it Bukta?"

The man was at his feet a second time. "He has not forgotten. He remembers his own people as his father remembered. Now can I

die. But first I will live and show the Sahib how to kill tigers. That *that* yonder is my nephew. If he is not a good servant, beat him and send him to me, and I will surely kill him, for now the Sahib is with his own people. Ai, Jan *baba*—Jan *baba !* My Jan *baba !* I will stay here and see that this does his work well. Take off his boots, fool. Sit down upon the bed, Sahib, and let me look. It *is* Jan *baba !*"

He pushed forward the hilt of his sword as a sign of service, which is an honour paid only to viceroys, governors, generals, or to little children whom one loves dearly. Chinn touched the hilt mechanically with three fingers, muttering he knew not what. It happened to be the old answer of his childhood, when Bukta in jest called him the little General Sahib.

The Major's quarters were opposite Chinn's, and when he heard his servant gasp with surprise he looked across the room. Then the Major sat on the bed and whistled ; for the spectacle of the senior native commissioned officer of the regiment, an " unmixed " Bhil, a Companion of the Order of British India, with thirty five years' spotless service in the army, and a rank among his own people superior to that of many Bengal princelings, valeting the last-joined subaltern, was a little too much for his nerves.

The throaty bugles blew the Mess-call that has a long legend behind it. First a few piercing notes like the shrieks of beaters in a far-away cover, and next, large, full, and smooth, the refrain of the wild song : " *And oh, and oh, the green pulse of Mundore—Mundore !*"

The call brought back childhood memories to the newest subaltern, full of nostalgia. So he hooked the dark collar of his new mess-jacket, and went to dinner like a prince who has newly inherited his father's crown.

Old Bukta swaggered forth curling his whiskers. He knew his own value, and no money and no rank within the gift of the Government would have induced him to put studs in young officers' shirts, or to hand them clean ties. Yet, when he took off his uniform that night, and squatted among his fellows for a quiet smoke, he told them what he had done, and they said that he was entirely right. Thereat Bukta propounded a theory which to a white mind would have seemed raving insanity; but the whispering, level-headed little men of war considered it from every point of view, and thought that there might be a great deal in it.

At mess under the oil lamps the talk turned as usual to the unfailing subject of *shikar*—big game shooting of every kind and under all sorts of conditions. Young Chinn opened his eyes when he understood that each one of his companions had shot several

tigers in the Wuddar style—on foot, that is—making no more of the business than if the brute had been a dog.

"In nine cases out of ten," said the Major, "a tiger is almost as dangerous as a porcupine. But the tenth time you come home feet first."

That set all talking, and long before midnight Chinn's brain was in a whirl with stories of tigers—man-eaters and cattle-killers each pursuing his own business as methodically as clerks in an office; new tigers that had lately come into such and such a district; and old, friendly beasts of great cunning, known by nicknames in the mess—such as "Puggy," who was lazy, with huge paws, and "Mrs. Malaprop," who turned up when you never expected her, and made female noises. Then they spoke of Bhil superstitions, a wide and picturesque field, till young Chinn hinted that they must be pulling his leg.

"'Deed we aren't," said a man on his left. "We know all about you. You're a Chinn and all that, and you've a sort of vested right here; but if you don't believe what we're telling you, what will you do when old Bukta begins his stories? He knows about ghost tigers, and tigers that go to a hell of their own; and tigers that walk on their hind feet; and your grandpapa's riding tiger as well. Odd he hasn't spoken of that yet."

"You know you've an ancestor buried down Satpura way, don't you?" asked the Major, as Chinn smiled irresolutely.

"Of course I do," said Chinn, who had the chronicle of the Book of Chinn by heart. It lies in a worn old ledger on the Chinese lacquer table behind the piano in the Devonshire home, and the children are encouraged to get it by heart.

"Well, I wasn't sure. Your revered ancestor, my boy, according to the Bhils, has a tiger of his own—a saddle tiger that he rides round the country whenever he feels inclined. *I* don't call it decent in an ex-Collector's ghost; but that is what the Southern Bhils believe. Even our men, who might be called moderately cool, don't care to beat that country if they hear that Jan Chinn is running about on his tiger. It is supposed to be a clouded animal—not stripy, but blotchy, like a tortoiseshell tom cat. No end of a brute, it is, and a sure sign of war or pestilence or—or something. There's a nice family legend for you."

"What's the origin of it, d'you suppose?" said Chinn.

"Ask the Satpura Bhils. Old Jan Chinn was a mighty hunter. Perhaps it was the tiger's revenge, or perhaps he's huntin' 'em still. You must go to his tomb one of these days. Bukta will probably attend to that. He was asking me before you came whether by any ill luck you had already bagged your tiger. If not, he is going to enter you under his own wing. Of course, for you

of all men it's imperative. You'll have a first class time with Bukta."

The Major was not wrong. Bukta kept an anxious eye on young Chinn at drill, and it was noticeable that the first time the new officer lifted up his voice in an order the whole line quivered. Even the Colonel was taken aback, for it might have been Lionel Chinn returned from Devonshire with a new lease of life. Bukta had continued to develop his peculiar theory among his intimates, and it was accepted as a matter of faith in the lines, since every word and gesture on young Chinn's part so confirmed it.

The old man arranged early that his darling should wipe out the reproach of not having shot a tiger; but he was not content to take the first or any beast that happened to arrive. In his own villages he dispensed the high, low, and middle justice, and when his people—naked and fluttered—came to him with word of a beast marked down, he bade them send spies to the kills and the watering places, that he might be sure the quarry was such a one as suited the dignity of such a man.

Three or four times the reckless trackers returned, most truthfully saying that the beast was mangy, undersized—a tigress worn with nursing, or a broken-toothed old male—and Bukta would curb young Chinn's impatience.

At last, a noble animal was marked down—a ten-foot cattle killer with a huge roll of loose skin along the belly, glossy-hided, full-frilled about the neck, whiskered, frisky, and young. He had slain a man in pure sport, they said.

"Let him be fed," quoth Bukta, and the villagers dutifully drove out cows to amuse him, that he might lie up nearby.

Princes and potentates have taken ship to India and spent great moneys for the mere glimpse of beasts one half as fine as this of Bukta's.

"It is not good," said he to the Colonel, when he asked for shooting-leave, "that my Colonel's son who may be—that my Colonel's son should lose his maidenhead on any small jungle beast. That may come after. I have waited long for this which is a tiger. He has come in from the Mair country. In seven days we will return with the skin."

The mess gnashed their teeth enviously. Bukta, had he chosen, might have invited them all. But he went out alone with Chinn, two days in a shooting cart and a day on foot, till they came to a rocky, glary valley with a pool of good water in it. It was a parching day, and the boy very naturally stripped and went in for a bathe, leaving Bukta by the clothes. A white skin shows far against brown jungle, and what Bukta beheld on Chinn's back and right shoulder dragged him forward step by step with staring eyeballs.

"I'd forgotten it isn't decent to strip before a man of his

position," thought Chinn, flouncing in the water. "How the little devil stares! What is it, Bukta?"

"The Mark!" was the whispered answer.

"It is nothing. You know how it is with my people!" Chinn was annoyed. The dull red birthmark on his shoulder, something like a conventionalized Tartar cloud, had slipped his memory, or he would not have bathed. It occurred, so they said at home, in alternate generations, appearing, curiously enough, eight or nine years after birth, and, save that it was part of the Chinn inheritance, would not be considered pretty.

He hurried ashore, dressed again, and went on till they met two or three Bhils, who promptly fell on their faces.

"My people," grunted Bukta, not condescending to notice them. "And so your people, Sahib. When I was a young man we were fewer, but not so weak. Now we are many, but poor stock. As may be remembered. How will you shoot him, Sahib? From a tree; from a shelter which my people shall build; by day or by night?"

"On foot and in the daytime," said young Chinn.

"That was your custom, as I have heard," said Bukta to himself. "I will get news of him. Then you and I will go to him. I will carry one gun. You have yours. There is no need of more. What tiger shall stand against *thee?*"

He was marked down by a little water-hole at the head of a ravine, full-gorged and half asleep in the May sunlight. He was walked up like a partridge, and he turned to do battle for his life. Bukta made no motion to raise his rifle, but kept his eyes on Chinn, who met the shattering roar of the charge with a single shot—it seemed to him hours as he sighted—which tore through the throat, smashing the backbone below the neck and between the shoulders. The brute crouched, choked, and fell, and before Chinn knew well what had happened Bukta bade him stay still while he paced the distance between his feet and the gaping jaws.

"Fifteen," said Bukta. "Short paces. No need for a second shot, Sahib. He bleeds cleanly where he lies, and we need not spoil the skin. I said there would be no need of these, but they came—in case."

Suddenly the sides of the ravine were crowned with the heads of Bukta's people—a force that could have blown the ribs out of the beast had Chinn's shot failed; but their guns were hidden, and they appeared as interested beaters, some five or six, waiting the word to skin. Bukta watched the life fade from the wild eyes, lifted one hand, and turned on his heel.

"No need to show that *we* care," said he. "Now, after

this, we can kill what we choose. Put out your hand, Sahib."

Chinn obeyed. It was entirely steady; and Bukta nodded. "That also was your custom. My men skin quickly. They will carry the skin to cantonments. Will the Sahib come to my poor village for the night and, perhaps, forget that I am his officer?"

"But those men—the beaters. They have worked hard, and perhaps—"

"Oh, if they skin clumsily, we will skin them. They are my people. In the Lines I am one thing. Here I am another."

This was very true. When Bukta doffed uniform and reverted to the fragmentary dress of his own people, he left his civilization of drill in the next world.

That night, after a little talk with his subjects, he devoted to an orgy; and a Bhil orgy is a thing not to be safely written about. Chinn, flushed with triumph, was in the thick of it; but the meaning of the mysteries was hidden. Wild folk came and pressed about his knees with offerings. He gave his flask to the elders of the village. They grew eloquent, and wreathed him about with flowers. Gifts and loans, not all seemly, were thrust upon him, and infernal music rolled and maddened round red fires, while singers sang songs of the ancient times, and danced peculiar dances. The aboriginal liquors are very potent, and Chinn was compelled to taste them often, but, unless the stuff had been drugged, how came he to fall asleep suddenly, and to waken late the next day—half a march away?

"The Sahib was very tired. A little before dawn he went to sleep," Bukta explained. "My people carried him here, and now it is time we should go back to cantonments."

The voice, smooth and deferential, the step, steady and silent, made it hard to believe that only a few hours before Bukta was yelling and capering with naked fellow-devils of the scrub.

"My people were very pleased to see the Sahib. They will never forget. When next the Sahib goes out recruiting, he will go to my people, and they will give him as many men as we need."

Chinn kept his own counsel, except as to the shooting of the tiger, and Bukta embroidered that tale with a shameless tongue. The skin was certainly one of the finest ever hung up in the mess, and the first of many. When Bukta could not accompany his boy on shooting-trips, he took care to put him in good hands, and Chinn learned more of the mind and desire of the wild Bhil in his marches and campings, by talks at twilight or at wayside pools, than an uninstructed man could have come at in a lifetime.

Presently his men in the regiment grew bold to speak of their relatives—mostly in trouble—and to lay cases of tribal custom before him. They would say, squatting in his verandah at twilight, after the easy, confidential style of the Wuddars, that such-and-such a

bachelor had run away with such-and-such a wife at a far-off village. Now, how many cows would Chinn Sahib consider a just fine? Or again, if written order came from the Government that a Bhil was to repair to a walled city of the plains to give evidence in a law court, would it be wise to disregard that order? On the other hand, if it were obeyed, would the rash voyager return alive?

"But what have I to do with these things?" Chinn demanded of Bukta, impatiently. "I am a soldier. I do not know the Law."

"Hoo! Law is for fools and white men. Give them a large and loud order and they will abide by it. Thou art their Law."

"But wherefore?"

Every trace of expression left Bukta's countenance. The idea might have smitten him for the first time. "How can I say?" he replied. "Perhaps it is on account of the name. A Bhil does not love strange things. Give them orders, Sahib—two, three, four words at a time such as they can carry away in their heads. That is enough."

Chinn gave orders then, valiantly, not realizing that a word spoken in haste before mess became the dread unappealable law of villages beyond the smoky hills—was, in truth, no less than the Law of Jan Chinn the First, who, so the whispered legend ran, had come back to earth to oversee the third generation in the body and bones of his grandson.

There could be no sort of doubt in this matter. All the Bhils knew that Jan Chinn reincarnated had honoured Bukta's village with his presence after slaying his first—in this life—tiger; that he had eaten and drunk with the people, as he was used; and—Bukta must have drugged Chinn's liquor very deeply—upon his back and right shoulder all men had seen the same angry red Flying Cloud that the high Gods had set on the flesh of Jan Chinn the First when first he came to the Bhil.

As concerned the foolish white world which has no eyes, he was a slim, young officer in the Wuddars; but his own people knew he was Jan Chinn, who had made the Bhil a man; and, believing, they hastened to carry his words, careful never to alter them on the way.

Because the savage and the child who plays lonely games have one horror of being laughed at or questioned, the little folk kept their convictions to themselves; and the Colonel, who thought he knew his regiment, never guessed that each one of the six hundred quick-footed, beady-eyed rank-and-file, at attention beside their rifles, believed serenely and unshakenly that the subaltern on the left flank of the line was a demi-god twice born—tutelary deity of their land and people. The Earth-gods themselves had stamped the incarnation, and who would dare to doubt their handiwork?

Chinn, being practical above all things, saw that his family name served him well in the lines and in camp. His men gave no trouble—

one does not commit regimental offences with a god in the chair of justice—and he was sure of the best beaters in the district when he needed them. They believed that the protection of Jan Chinn the First cloaked them, and were bold in that belief beyond the utmost daring of excited Bhils.

His quarters began to look like an amateur natural-history museum, in spite of duplicate heads and horns and skulls that he sent home to Devonshire. The people, very humanly, learned the weak side of their god. It is true he was unbribable, but bird-skins, butterflies, beetles, and, above all, news of big game pleased him. In other respects, too, he lived up to the Chinn tradition. He was fever-proof. A night's sitting out over a tethered goat in a damp valley, that would have filled the Major with a month's malaria, had no effect on him. He was, they said, "salted before he was born."

Now in the autumn of his second year's service an uneasy rumour crept out of the earth and ran about among the Bhils. Chinn heard nothing of it till a brother officer said across the mess table: "Your revered ancestor's on the rampage in the Satpura country. You'd better look him up."

"I don't want to be disrespectful, but I'm a little sick of my revered ancestor. Bukta talks of nothing else. What's the old boy supposed to be doing now?"

"Riding cross-country by moonlight on his processional tiger. That's the story. He's been seen by about two thousand Bhils, skipping along the tops of the Satpuras, and scaring people to death. They believe it devoutly, and all the Satpura chaps are worshipping away at his shrine—tomb, I mean—like good 'uns. You really ought to go down there. Must be a queer thing to see your grandfather treated as a god."

"What makes you think there's any truth in the tale?" said Chinn.

"Because all our men deny it. They say they've never heard of Chinn's tiger. Now that's a manifest lie, because every Bhil *has*."

"There's only one thing you've overlooked," said the Colonel, thoughtfully. "When a local god reappears on earth it's always an excuse for trouble of some kind; and those Satpura Bhils are about as wild as your grandfather left them. It means something."

"Meanin' they may go on the warpath?" said Chinn.

"Can't say—as yet. Shouldn't be surprised a little bit."

"I haven't been told a syllable."

"Proves it all the more. They are keeping something back."

"Bukta tells me everything, too, as a rule. Now, why didn't he tell me that?"

Chinn put the question directly to the old man that night, and the answer surprised him.

"Why should I tell what is well known? Yes, the Clouded Tiger is out in the Satpura country."

"What do the wild Bhils think that it means?"

"They do not know. They wait. Sahib, what *is* coming? Say only one little word, and we will be content."

"We? What have tales from the south, where the jungly Bhils live, to do with drilled men?"

"When Jan Chinn wakes is no time for any Bhil to be quiet."

"But he has not waked, Bukta."

"Sahib"—the old man's eyes were full of tender reproof—"if he does not wish to be seen, why does he go abroad in the moonlight? We know he is awake, but we do not know what he desires. Is it a sign for all the Bhils, or one that concerns the Satpura folk alone? Say one little word, Sahib, that I may carry it to the lines, and send on to our villages. Why does Jan Chinn ride out? Who has done wrong? Is it pestilence? Is it a sword? Remember, Sahib, we are thy people and thy servants, and in this life I bore thee in my arms—not knowing."

"Bukta has evidently looked on the cup this evening," Chinn thought; "but if I can do anything to soothe the old chap, I must."

He dropped into a deep wicker chair, over which was thrown his first tiger skin, and his weight on the cushion flapped the clawed paws over his shoulders. He laid hold of them mechanically as he spoke, drawing the painted hide, cloak fashion, about him.

"Now will I tell the truth, Bukta," he said, leaning forward, the dried muzzle on his shoulder, to invent a specious lie.

"I see that it is the truth," was the answer, in a shaking voice.

"Jan Chinn goes abroad among the Satpuras, riding on the Clouded Tiger, ye say? Be it so. Therefore the sign of the wonder is for the Satpura Bhils only, and does not touch the Bhils who plough in the north and east, the Bhils of the Khandesh, or any others, except the Satpura Bhils, who, as we know, are wild and foolish."

"It is, then, a sign for *them*. Good or bad?"

"Beyond doubt, good. For why should Jan Chinn make evil to those whom he has made men? The nights over yonder are hot; it is ill to lie in one bed over long without turning, and Jan Chinn would look again upon his people. So he rises, whistles his Clouded Tiger, and goes abroad a little to breathe the cool air. If the Satpura Bhils kept to their villages, and did not wander after dark, they would not see him. Indeed, Bukta, it is no more than that he would see the light again in his own country. Send this news south, and say that it is my word."

Bukta bowed to the floor. "Good heavens!" thought Chinn, "and this blinking pagan is a first class officer, and as straight as a die! I may as well round it off neatly." He went on:

"If the Satpura Bhils ask the meaning of the sign, tell them that Jan Chinn would see how they kept their old promises of good living. Perhaps they have plundered; perhaps they mean to disobey the orders of the Government; perhaps there is a dead man in the jungle; and so Jan Chinn has come to see."

"Is he, then, angry?"

"Bah! Am *I* ever angry with my Bhils? I say angry words, and threaten many things. *Thou* knowest, Bukta. I have seen thee smile behind the hand. I know, and thou knowest. The Bhils are my children. I have said it many times."

"Ay. We be thy children," said Bukta.

"And no otherwise is it with Jan Chinn, my father's father. He would see the land he loved and the people once again. It is a good ghost, Bukta. I say it. Go and tell them. And I do hope devoutly," he added, "that it will calm 'em down." Flinging back the tiger skin, he rose with a long, unguarded yawn.

Bukta fled, to be received in the lines by a knot of panting enquirers.

"It is true," said Bukta. "He wrapped himself in the skin and spoke from it. He would see his own country again. The sign is not for us; and, indeed, he is a young man. How should he lie idle of nights? He says his bed is too hot and the air is bad. He goes to and fro for the love of night-running."

The grey-whiskered assembly shuddered.

"He says the Bhils are his children. Ye know he does not lie. He has said it to me."

"But what of the Satpura Bhils? What means it for them?"

"Nothing. It is only night-running, as I have said. He rides to see if they obey the Government, as he taught them to do in his first life."

"And what if they do not?"

"He did not say."

The light went out in Chinn's quarters.

"Look," said Bukta. "Now he goes away. None the less it is a good ghost, as he has said. How shall we fear Jan Chinn, who made the Bhil a man? His protection is on us; and ye know Jan Chinn never broke a protection spoken or written on paper. When he is older and takes a wife he will lie in his bed till morning."

A commanding officer is generally aware of the regimental state of mind a little before the men; and this is why the Colonel said a few days later that someone had been putting the fear of God

into the Wuddars. As he was the only person officially entitled to do this, it distressed him to see such unanimous virtue. "It's too good to last," he said. "I only wish I could find out what the little chaps mean."

The explanation, as it seemed to him, came at the change of the moon, when he received orders to hold himself in readiness to "allay any possible excitement" among the Satpura Bhils, who were, to put it mildly, uneasy because a paternal Government had sent up against them a Mahratta State-educated vaccinator, with lancets, lymph, and an officially registered calf. In the language of State, they had "manifested a strong objection to all prophylactic measures," had "forcibly detained the vaccinator," and "were on the point of neglecting or evading their tribal obligations."

"That means they are in a blue funk—same as they were at census time," said the Colonel; "and if we stampede them into the hills we'll never catch 'em, in the first place, and, in the second, they'll whoop off plundering till further orders. Wonder who the God-forsaken idiot is who is trying to vaccinate a Bhil. I knew trouble was coming. One good thing is that they'll only use local corps, and we can knock up something we'll call a campaign, and let them down easy. Fancy us potting our best beaters because they don't want to be vaccinated! They're only crazy with fear."

"Don't you think, sir," said Chinn the next day, "that perhaps you could give me a fortnight's shooting-leave?"

"Desertion in the face of the enemy, by Jove!" The Colonel laughed. "I might, but I'd have to antedate it a little, because we're warned for service, as you might say. However, we'll assume you applied for leave three days ago, and are well on your way south."

"I'd like to take Bukta with me."

"Of course, yes. I think that will be the best plan. You've some kind of hereditary influence with the little chaps, and they may listen to you when a glimpse of our uniforms would drive them wild. You've never been in that part of the world before, have you? Take care they don't send you to your vault in your youth and innocence. I believe you'll be all right if you can get 'em to listen to you."

"I think so, sir; but if—if they should accidentally put an—make asses of 'emselves—they might, you know—I hope you'll represent that they were only frightened. There isn't an ounce of real vice in 'em, and I should never forgive myself if any one of—of my name got them into trouble."

The Colonel nodded, but said nothing.

Chinn and Bukta departed at once. Bukta did not say that, ever since the official vaccinator had been dragged into the hills by indignant Bhils, runner after runner had skulked up to the lines,

entreating, with forehead in the dust, that Jan Chinn should come and explain this unknown horror that hung over his people.

The portent of the Clouded Tiger was now too clear. Let Jan Chinn comfort his own, for vain was the help of mortal man. Bukta toned down these beseechings to a simple request for Chinn's presence. Nothing would have pleased the old man better than a rough-and-tumble campaign against the Satpuras, whom he, as an "unmixed" Bhil, despised; but he had a duty to all his nation as Jan Chinn's interpreter, and he devoutly believed that forty plagues would fall on his village if he tampered with that obligation. Besides, Jan Chinn knew all things, and he rode the Clouded Tiger.

They covered thirty miles a day on foot and pony, raising the blue wall-like line of the Satpuras as swiftly as might be. Bukta was very silent.

They began the steep climb a little after noon, but it was near sunset before they reached the stone platform clinging to the side of a rifted, jungle-covered hill, where Jan Chinn the First was laid, as he had desired, that he might overlook his people. All India is full of neglected graves that date from the beginning of the eighteenth century—tombs of forgotten colonels of corps long since disbanded; mates of East Indiamen who went on shooting expeditions and never came back; factors, agents, writers, and ensigns of the Honourable East India Company by hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands. English folk forget quickly, but natives have long memories, and if a man has done good in his life it is remembered.

The weathered marble four-square tomb of Jan Chinn was hung about with wild flowers and nuts, packets of wax and honey, bottles of native spirits, and infamous cigars, with buffalo horns and plumes of dried grass. At one end was a rude clay image of a white man, in the old-fashioned top-hat, riding on a bloated tiger.

Bukta salaamed reverently as they approached. Chinn bared his head and began to pick out the blurred inscription.

For some little time he leaned on the tomb thinking of this dead man of his own blood, and of the house in Devonshire; then, nodding to the plains; "Yes; it's a big work—all of it—even my little share. He must have been worth knowing. . . . Bukta, where are my people?"

"Not here, Sahib. No man comes here except in full sun. They wait above. Let us climb and see."

But Chinn, remembering the first law of Oriental diplomacy, in an even voice answered: "I have come this far only because the Satpura folk are foolish, and dared not visit our lines. Now bid them wait on me *here*. I am not a servant, but the master of Bhils."

"I go—I go," clucked the old man. Night was falling, and at

any moment Jan Chinn might whistle up his dreaded steed from the darkening scrub.

Now for the first time in a long life Bukta disobeyed a lawful command and deserted his leader; for he did not come back, but pressed to the flat table-top of the hill, and called softly. Men stirred all about him—little trembling men with bows and arrows who had watched the two since noon.

"Where is he?" whispered one.

"At his own place. He bids you come," said Bukta.

"Now?"

"Now."

"Rather let him loose the Clouded Tiger upon us. We do not go."

"Nor I, though I bore him in my arms when he was a child in this his life. Wait here till the day."

"But surely he will be angry."

"He will be very angry, for he has nothing to eat. But he has said to me many times that the Bhils are his children. By sunlight I believe this, but—by moonlight I am not so sure. What folly have ye Satpura pigs compassed that ye should need him at all?"

"One came to us in the name of the Government with little ghost-knives and a magic calf, meaning to turn us into cattle by the cutting off of our arms. We were greatly afraid, but we did not kill the man. He is here, bound—a black man; and we think he comes from the West. He said it was an order to cut us all with knives—especially the women and the children. We did not hear that it was an order, so we were afraid, and kept to our hills. Some of our men have taken ponies and bullocks from the plains, and others pots and cloths and ear-rings."

"Are any slain?"

"By our men? Not yet. But the young men are blown to and fro by many rumours like flames upon a hill. I sent runners asking for Jan Chinn, lest worse should come to us. It was this fear that he foretold by the sign of the Clouded Tiger."

"He says it is otherwise," said Bukta; and he repeated, with amplifications, all that young Chinn had told him.

"Think you," said the questioner, at last, "that the Government will lay hands on us?"

"Not I," Bukta rejoined. "Jan Chinn will give an order, and ye will obey. The rest is between the Government and Jan Chinn. I myself know something of the ghost-knives and the scratching. It is a charm against the Smallpox. But how it is done I cannot tell. Nor need that concern you."

"If he stand by us and before the anger of the Government, we will most strictly obey Jan Chinn, except—except we do not go down to that place tonight."

They could hear young Chinn below them shouting for Bukta; but they cowered and sat still, expecting the Clouded Tiger. The tomb had been holy ground for nearly half a century. If Jan Chinn chose to sleep there, who had better right? But they would not come within eyeshot of the place till broad day.

At first Chinn was exceedingly angry, till it occurred to him that Bukta most probably had a reason—which, indeed, he had—and his own dignity might suffer if he yelled without answer. He propped himself against the foot of the grave, and, alternately dozing and smoking, came through the warm night proud that he was a lawful, legitimate, fever-proof Chinn.

He prepared his plan of action much as his grandfather would have done; and when Bukta appeared in the morning with a most liberal supply of food, said nothing of the overnight desertion. Bukta would have been relieved by an outburst of human anger; but Chinn finished his victual leisurely before he made any sign.

"They are very much afraid," said Bukta, who was not too bold himself. "It remains only to give orders. They say they will obey if thou wilt only stand between them and the Government."

"That I know," said Chinn, strolling slowly to the tableland. A few of the elder men stood in an irregular semi-circle in an open glade; but the ruck of people—women and children—were hidden in the thicket. They had no desire to face the first anger of Jan Chinn the First.

Seating himself on a fragment of split rock, he smoked his cheroot to the butt, hearing men breathe hard all about him. Then he cried, so suddenly that they jumped:

"Bring the man that was bound!"

A scuffle and a cry were followed by the appearance of a Hindu vaccinator, quaking with fear, bound hand and foot, as the Bhils of old were accustomed to bind their human sacrifices. He was pushed cautiously before the presence; but young Chinn did not look at him.

"I said—the man that *was* bound. Is it a jest to bring me one tied like a buffalo? Since when could the Bhil bind folk at his pleasure? Cut!"

Half a dozen hasty knives cut away the thongs, and the man crawled to Chinn, who pocketed his case of lancets and tubes of lymph. Then, sweeping the semi-circle with one comprehensive forefinger, and in the voice of compliment, he said, clearly and distinctly: "Pigs!"

"Ai!" whispered Bukta. "Now he speaks. Woe to foolish people!"

"I have come on foot from my house"—the assembly shud-

dered—" to make clear a matter which any other than a Satpura Bhil would have seen with both eyes from a distance. Ye know the Smallpox, who pits and scars your children so that they look like wasp-combs. It is an order of the Government that whoso is scratched on the arm with these little knives which I hold up is charmed against Her. All Sahibs are thus charmed, and very many Hindus. This is the mark of the charm. Look!"

He rolled back his sleeve to the armpit and showed the white scars of the vaccination mark. "Come, all, and look."

A few daring spirits came up, and nodded their heads wisely. There was certainly a mark, and they knew well what other dread marks were hidden by the shirt. Merciful was Jan Chinn, that he had not then and there proclaimed his godhead.

"Now all these things the man whom ye bound told you."

"I did—a hundred times; but they answered with blows," groaned the operator, chafing his wrists and ankles.

"But, being pigs, ye did not believe; and so came I here to save you, first from Smallpox, next from a great folly of fear, and lastly, it may be, from the rope and the jail. It is no gain to me; it is no pleasure to me; but for the sake of that one who is yonder, who made the Bhil a man"—he pointed down the hill—"I, who am of his blood, the son of his son, come to turn your people. And I speak the truth, as did Jan Chinn."

The crowd murmured reverently, and men stole out of the thicket by twos and threes to join it. There was no anger in their god's face.

"These are my orders." (Heaven send they'll take 'em, but I seem to have impressed them so far! he thought.) "I myself will stay among you while this man scratches your arms with knives, after the order of the Government. In three, or it may be five or seven days, your arms will swell and itch and burn. That is the power of Smallpox fighting in your base blood against the orders of the Government. I will therefore stay among you till I see that Smallpox is conquered, and I will not go away till the men and the women and the little children show me upon their arms such marks as I have even now showed you. I bring with me two very good guns, and a man whose name is known among beasts and men. We will hunt together, I and he, and your young men and the others shall eat and lie still. This is my order."

There was a long pause while victory hung in the balance. A white-haired old sinner, standing on one uneasy leg, piped up:

"There are ponies and bullocks and other things for which we need protection. They were *not* taken in the way of trade."

The battle was won, and John Chinn drew a breath of relief.

The young Bhils had been raiding, but if taken swiftly all could be put straight.

"I will write a writ of protection as soon as the ponies, the bullocks, and the other things are counted before me and sent back whence they came. But first we will put the Government mark on such as have not been visited by Smallpox." In an undertone, he said to the vaccinator: "If you show you are afraid you'll never see Poona again, my friend."

"There is not sufficient supply of vaccine for all this population," said the man. "They have destroyed the official calf."

"They won't know the difference. Scrape 'em all round, and give me a couple of lancets; I'll attend to the elders."

The aged diplomat who had demanded protection was the first victim. He fell to Chinn's hand, and dared not cry out. As soon as he was freed he dragged up a companion, and held him fast, and the crisis became, as it were, a child's sport; for the vaccinated chased the unvaccinated to treatment, vowing that all the tribe must suffer equally. The women shrieked, and the children ran howling; but Chinn laughed, and waved the pink-tipped lancet.

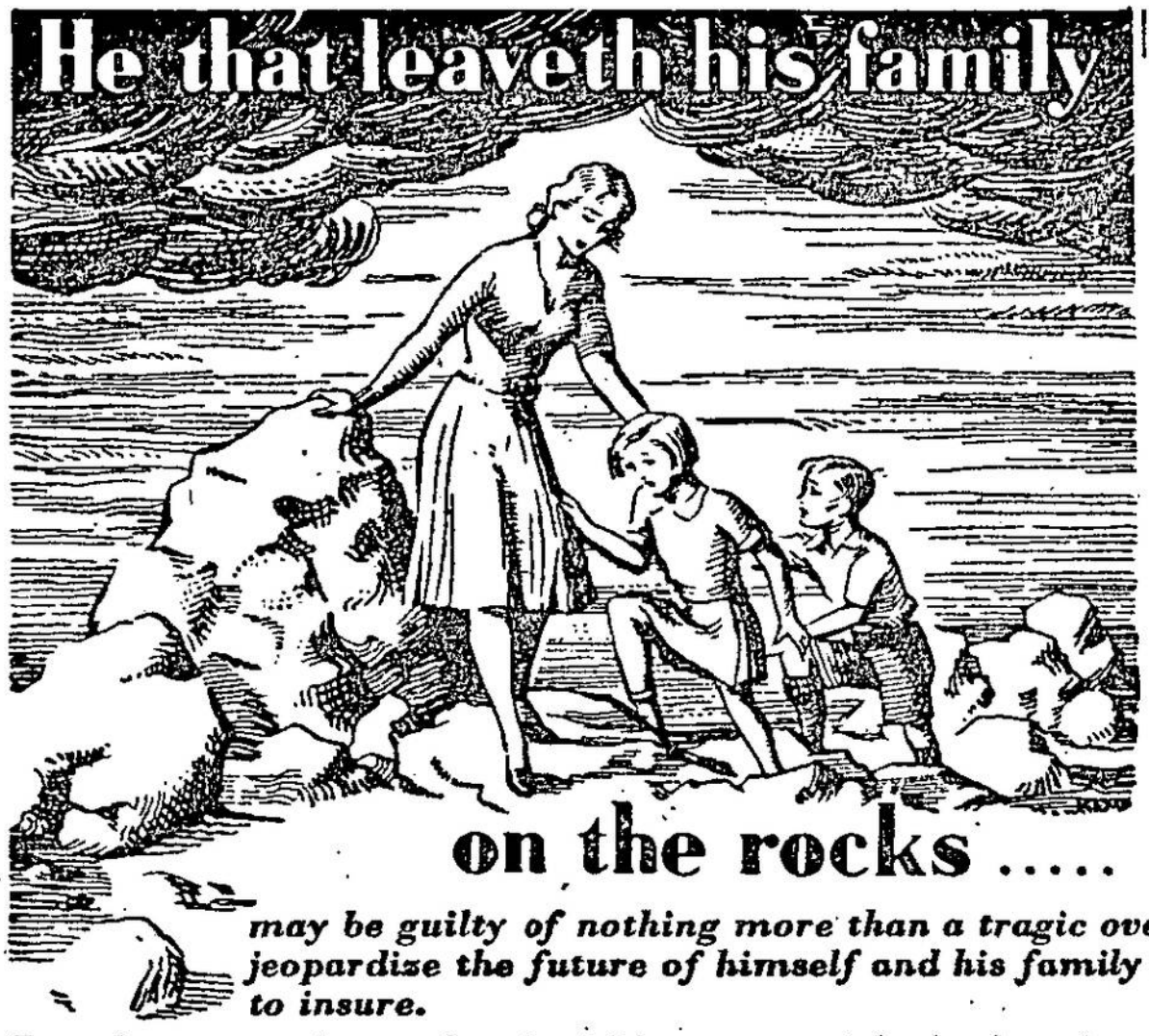
"It is an honour," he cried. "Tell them, Bukta, how great an honour it is that I myself should mark them. Nay, I cannot mark every one—the Hindu must also do his work—but I will touch all marks that he makes, so there will be an equal virtue in them. Thus do the Rajputs stick pigs. Ho, brother with one eye! Catch that girl and bring her to me. She need not run away yet, for she is not married, and I do not seek her in marriage. She will not come? Then she shall be shamed by her little brother, a fat boy, a bold boy. He puts out his arm like a soldier. Look! *He* does not flinch at the blood. Some day he shall be in my regiment. And now, mother of many, we will lightly touch thee, for Smallpox has been before us here. It is a true thing, indeed, that this charm breaks the power of Mata. There will be no more pitted faces among the Satpuras, and so ye can ask many cows for each maid to be wed."

And so on and so on—quick-poured showman's patter, sauced in the Bhil hunting proverbs and tales of their own brand of coarse humour—till the lancets were blunted and both operators worn out.

But, nature being the same the world over, the unvaccinated grew jealous of their marked comrades, and came near to blows about it. Then Chinn declared himself a court of justice, no longer a medical board, and made formal enquiry into the late robberies.

"We are the thieves of Mahadeo," said the Bhils, simply. "It is our fate, and we were frightened. When we are frightened we always steal."

Simply and directly as children, they gave in the tale of the plunder, all but two bullocks and some spirits that could not be



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found—these Chinn promised to make good out of his own pocket—and ten ringleaders were despatched to the lowlands with a wonderful document, written on the leaf of a notebook, and addressed to an assistant district superintendent of police. There was warm calamity in that note, as Jan Chinn warned them, but anything was better than loss of liberty.

Armed with this protection, the repentant raiders went downhill. They had no desire whatever to meet Mr. Dundas Fawne of the Police, aged twenty two, and of a cheerful countenance, nor did they wish to revisit the scene of their robberies. Steering a middle course, they ran into the camp of the one Government chaplain allowed to the various irregular corps through a district of some fifteen thousand square miles, and stood before him in a cloud of dust. He was by way of being a priest they knew, and what was more to the point, a good sportsman who paid his beaters generously.

When he read Chinn's note he laughed, which they deemed a lucky omen, till he called up policemen, who tethered the ponies and the bullocks by the piled house-gear, and laid stern hands upon three of that smiling band of the thieves of Mahadeo. The chaplain himself addressed them magisterially with a riding-whip. That was painful, but Jan Chinn had prophesied it. They submitted, but would not give up the written protection, fearing the jail. On their way back they met Mr. Dundas Fawne, who had heard about the robberies, and was not pleased.

"Certainly," said the eldest of the gang, when the second interview was at an end, "certainly Jan Chinn's protection has saved us our liberty, but it is as though there were many beatings in one small piece of paper. Put it away."

One climbed into a tree, and stuck the letter into a cleft forty feet from the ground, where it could do no harm. Warmed, sore, but happy, the ten returned to Jan Chinn next day, where he sat among uneasy Bhils, all looking at their right arms, and all bound under terror of their god's disfavour not to scratch.

"It was a good protection," said the leader. "First the chaplain, who laughed, took away our plunder, and beat three of us, as was promised. Next, we met Fawne Sahib, who frowned, and asked for the plunder. We spoke the truth, and so he beat us all, one after another, and called us chosen names. He then gave us these two bundles"—they set down a bottle of whisky and a box of cheroots—"and we came away. The protection is left in a tree, because its virtue is that so soon as we show it to a Sahib we are beaten."

"But for that protection," said Jan Chinn, sternly, "ye would all have been marching to jail with a policeman on either side. Ye come now to serve as beaters for me. These people are unhappy, and we will go hunting till they are well. Tonight we will make a feast."

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Between headaches and stomach-aches they found no time to think of their arms, but followed Jan Chinn obediently through the jungles, and with each day's returning confidence men, women and children stole away to their villages as the little army passed by. They carried news that it was good and right to be scratched with ghost-knives ; that Jan Chinn was indeed reincarnated as a god of free food and drink, and that of all nations the Satpura Bhils stood first in his favour, if they would only refrain from scratching. Henceforward that kindly demi-god would be connected in their minds with great gorgings and the vaccine and lancets of a paternal Government.

" And tomorrow I go back to my home," said Jan Chinn to his faithful few, whom neither spirits, over-eating, nor swollen glands could conquer. It is hard for children and savages to behave reverently at all times to the idols of their make-belief, and they had frolicked excessively with Jan Chinn. But the reference to his home cast a gloom on the people.

" And the Sahib will not come again ? " said he who had been vaccinated first.

" That is to be seen," answered Chinn, warily.

" Nay, but come as a white man—come as a young man whom we know and love ; for, as thou alone knowest, we are a weak people. If we again saw thy—thy horse—" They were picking up their courage.

" I have no horse. I came on foot—with Bukta, yonder. What is this ? "

" Thou knowest—the Thing that thou hast chosen for a night-horse." The little men squirmed in fear and awe.

" Night-horse ? Bukta, what is this latest tale of children ? "

Bukta had been a silent leader in Chinn's presence since the night of his desertion, and was grateful for a chance-flung question.

" They know, Sahib," he whispered. " It is the Clouded Tiger. That which comes from the place where thou didst once sleep. It is thy horse—as it has been these three generations."

" My horse ! That was a dream of the Bhils ! "

" It is no dream. Do dreams leave the tracks of broad pugs on earth ? Why make two faces before thy people ? They know of the night-ridings, and they—and they—"

" Are afraid, and would have them cease."

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Bukta nodded. "If thou hast no further need of him. He is thy horse."

"The thing leaves a trail, then?" said Chinn.

"We have seen it. It is like a village road under the tomb."

"Can ye find and follow it for me?"

"By daylight—if one comes with us, and, above all, stands nearby."

"I will stand close, and we will see to it that Jan Chinn does not ride any more."

The Bhils shouted the last words again and again.

From Chinn's point of view the stalk was nothing more than an ordinary one—down hill, through split and crannied rocks, unsafe, perhaps, if a man did not keep his wits by him, but no worse than twenty others he had undertaken. Yet his men—they refused absolutely to beat, and would only trail—dripped sweat at every move. They showed the marks of enormous pugs that ran, always down hill, to a few hundred feet below Jan Chinn's tomb, and disappeared in a narrow-mouthed cave. It was an insolently open road, a domestic highway, beaten without thought of concealment.

"The beggar might be paying rent and taxes," Chinn muttered before he asked whether his friend's taste ran to cattle or man.

"Cattle," was the answer. "Two heifers a week. We drive them for him at the foot of the hill. It is his custom. If we did not, he might seek us."

"Blackmail and piracy," said Chinn. "I can't say I fancy going into the cave after him. What's to be done?"

The Bhils fell back as Chinn lodged himself behind a rock with his rifle ready. Tigers, he knew, were shy beasts, but one who had been long cattle-fed might prove overbold.

"He speaks!" someone whispered from the rear. "He knows, too."

"Well, of *all* the infernal cheek!" said Chinn. There was an angry growl from the cave—a direct challenge.

"Come out, then," Chinn shouted. "Come out of that! Let's have a look at you."

The brute knew well enough that there was some connection between brown nude Bhils and his weekly allowance; but the white helmet in the sunlight annoyed him, and he did not approve of the voice that broke his rest. Lazily as a gorged snake he dragged himself out of the cave, and stood yawning and blinking at the entrance. The sunlight fell upon his flat right side, and Chinn wondered.

Never had he seen a tiger marked after this fashion. Except for

his head, which was staringly barred, he was dappled—not striped, but dappled like a child's rocking-horse in rich shades of smoky black on red gold. That portion of his belly and throat which should have been white was orange, and his tail and paws were black.

He looked leisurely for some ten seconds, and then deliberately lowered his head, his chin dropped and drawn in, staring intently at the man. The effect of this was to throw forward the round arch of his skull, with two broad bands across it, while below the bands glared the unwinking eyes ; so that, head on, as he stood, he showed something like a diabolically scowling pantomime mask.

It was a piece of natural mesmerism that he had practised many times on his quarry, and though Chinn was by no means a terrified heifer, he stood for a while, held by the extraordinary oddity of the attack. The head—the body seemed to have been packed away behind it—the ferocious, skull-like head, crept nearer, to the switching of an angry tail-tip in the grass. Left and right the Bhils had scattered to let Jan Chinn subdue his own horse.

"My word!" he thought. "He's trying to frighten me!" and fired between the saucer-like eyes, leaping aside upon the shot.

A big coughing mass, reeking of carrion, bounded past him up the hill, and he followed discreetly. The tiger made no attempt to turn into the jungle ; he was hunting for sight and breath—nose up, mouth open, the tremendous forelegs scattering the gravel in spurts.

"Scuppered!" said John Chinn, watching the flight. "Now if he was a partridge he'd tower. Lungs must be full of blood."

The brute had jerked himself over a boulder and fallen out of sight the other side. John Chinn looked over with a ready barrel. But the red trail led straight as an arrow even to his grandfather's tomb, and there, among the smashed spirit bottles and the fragments of the mud image, the life left with a flurry and a grunt.

"If my worthy ancestor could see that," said John Chinn, "he'd have been proud of me. Eyes, lower jaw, and lungs. A very nice shot." He whistled for Bukta as he drew the tape over the stiffening bulk.

"Ten—six—eight—by Jove! It's nearly eleven—call it eleven. Fore-arm, twenty four—five—seven and a half. A short tail, too ; three feet one. But *what* a skin! Oh, Bukta! Bukta! The men with the knives swiftly."

"Is he beyond question dead?" said an awe-stricken voice.

"That was not the way I killed my first tiger," said Chinn. "I did not think that Bukta would run. I had no second gun."

"It—it is the Clouded Tiger," said Bukta, unheeding the taunt. "He is dead."

Whether all the Bhils, vaccinated and unvaccinated, of the

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Satpuras had lain by to see the kill, Chinn could not say; but the whole hill's flank rustled with little men, shouting, singing, and stamping. And yet, till he had made the first cut in the splendid skin, not a man would take a knife; and, when the shadows fell, they ran from the red-stained tomb, and no persuasion would bring them back till dawn. So Chinn spent a second night in the open, guarding the carcass from jackals, and thinking about his ancestor.

He returned to the lowlands to the triumphal chant of an escorting army three hundred strong, the Mahratta vaccinator close at his elbow, and the rudely dried skin a trophy before him. When that army suddenly and noiselessly disappeared, as quail in high corn, he argued he was near civilization, and a turn in the road brought him upon the camp of a wing of his own corps. He left the skin on a cart-tail for the world to see, and sought the Colonel.

"They're perfectly all right," he explained earnestly. "There isn't an ounce of vice in 'em. They were only frightened. I've vaccinated the whole boiling, and they like it awfully. What are—what are we doing here, sir?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out," said the Colonel. "I don't know yet whether we're a piece of a brigade or a police force. However, I think we'll call ourselves a police force. How did you manage to get a Bhil vaccinated?"

"Well, sir," said Chinn, "I've been thinking it over, and, as far as I can make out, I've got a sort of hereditary influence over 'em."

"So I know, or I wouldn't have sent you; but *what*, exactly?"

"It's rather rummy. It seems, from what I can make out, that I'm my own grandfather reincarnated, and I've been disturbing the peace of the country by riding a pad-tiger of nights. If I hadn't done that, I don't think they'd have objected to the vaccination; but the two together were more than they could stand. And so, sir, I've vaccinated 'em, and shot my tiger-horse as a sort o' proof of good faith. You never saw such a skin in your life."

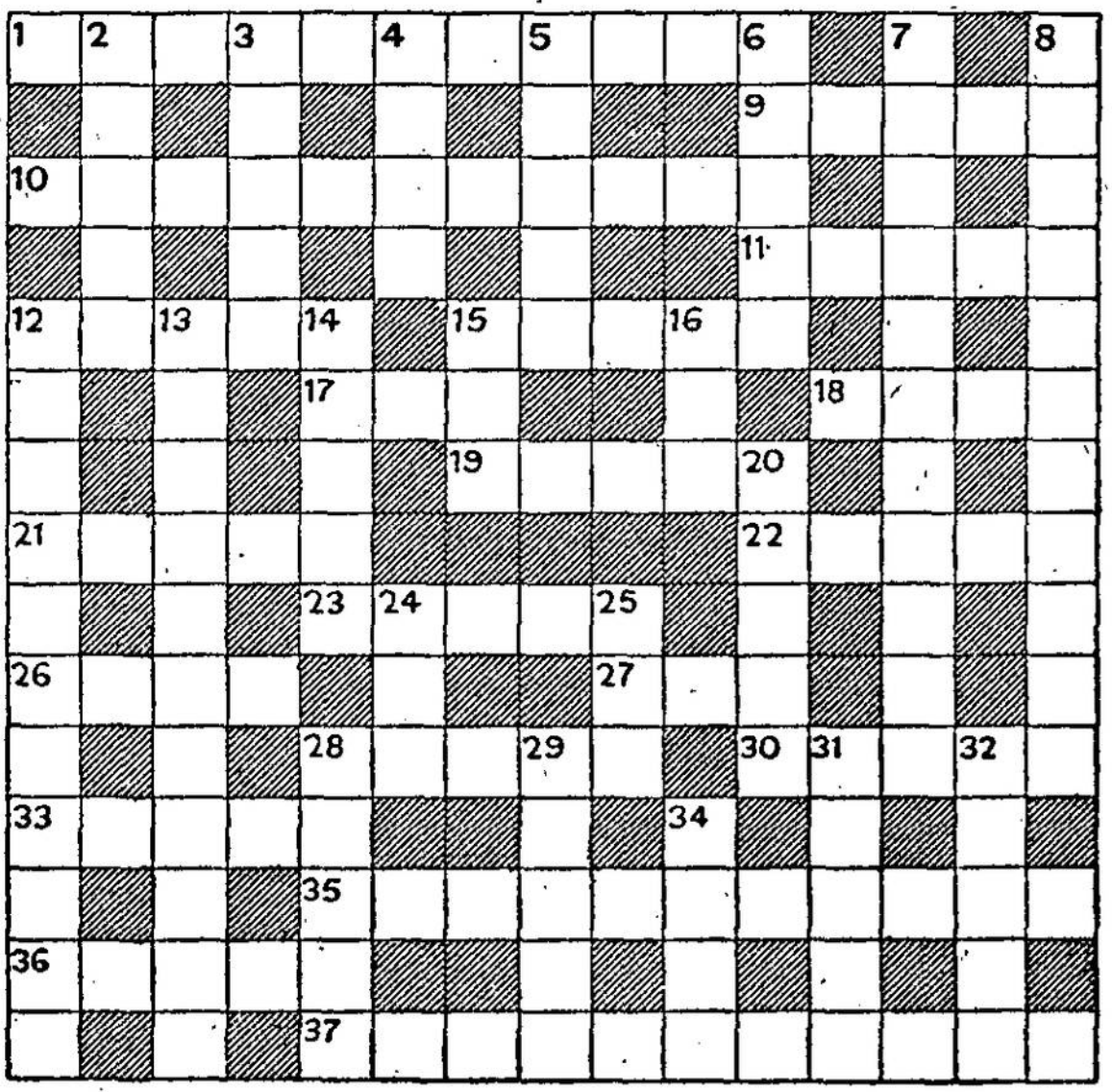
The Colonel tugged his moustache thoughtfully. "Now, how the deuce," said he, "am I to include that in my report?"

Indeed, the official version of the Bhils' anti-vaccination stampede said nothing about Lieutenant John Chinn, his godship. But Bukta knew, and the corps knew, and every Bhil in the Satpura hills knew.

And now Bukta is zealous that John Chinn shall swiftly be wedded and impart his powers to a son; for if the Chinn succession fails, and the little Bhils are left to their own imaginings, there will be fresh trouble in the Satpuras.

ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 61



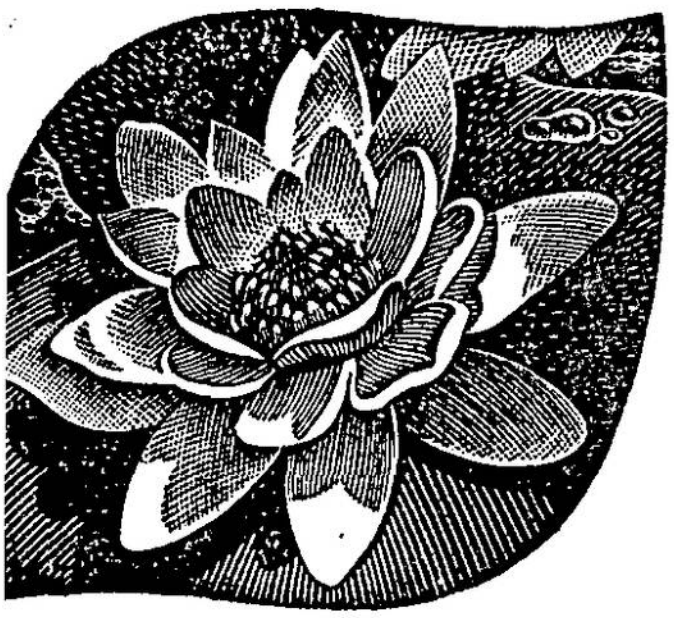
CLUES

Across

1 Use a blue one for censorship—and this for denigration, perhaps (5, 6).
9 Tra-la for a shrine! (5).
10 The Chancellor's share of the pay packet? (6, 5).
11 Was the Irish patriot an ant, then? (5).
12 Hole in the Great Wall of China? (5).
15 Caught by Masefield at sea? (5).
17 Star of "The Queen Of Spades"? (3).
18 Ne — ultra (4).
19 Who opens his mouth with a joyful cry? (5).
21 Formerly a market, and still a talking-shop (5).
22 "That — was no more difficile, Than to a blackbird 'tis to whistle" (Samuel Butler) (5).
23 Forever cautious; at least on the road! (5).
26 Roam over (4).
27 The object of a French friend? (3).
28 To the mill with it! (5).
30 O, for an R with it, that the weak-kneed might take spirit! (5).
33 Displace his heart, and the psychiatrist becomes a tree! (5).
35 "He hath indeed better bettered —" (Much Ado About Nothing) (11).
36 Lot's weapon, not his wife! (5).
37 What De La Mare's "Traveller" used? (4, 7).

Down

2 Hélas, to be on a chain! (5).
3 Sign of the knowing infinitive (5).
4 With their best foot forward, they might steal your purse (4).
5 Halter for a homicide (5).
6 Take 'plate' from the front, And 'cake' from the rear, And the stratum between Is all that's left here! (5).
7 The pretence to a T for a pick-me-up! (11).
8 More appropriate for the Fleet to wear this than Prussian blue for example (7, 4).
12 Sounds as if dining would be anything but, if the bailiffs had done this! (11).
13 Me print Ovid? What metamorphoses! (11).
14 The Buddhist's destiny (5).
15 "What though my winged hours of bliss have been Like angel-visits, — and far between?" (Thomas Campbell) (3).
16 I sound like patent hen-food! (3).
20 Sound the depths; for a drupe? (5)
24 Spoil the singular planet (3).
25 "How now! a —? Dead, for a ducat, dead!" (Hamlet) (3).
28 Not the vice of Old Mother Hubbard (5).
29 Spare the rod; more effective to use this! (5).
31 A garret in Greece (5).
32 Monotonous buzz of an indolent insect (5).
34 Reversed note at school (4).



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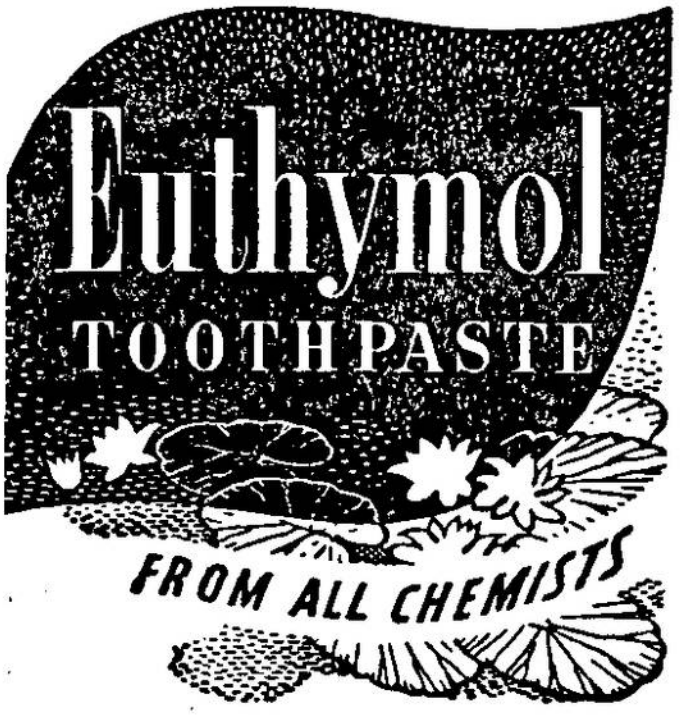

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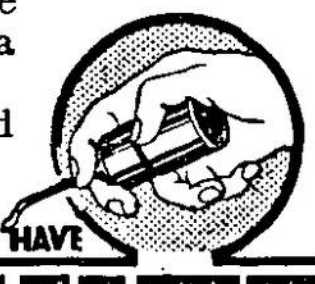

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